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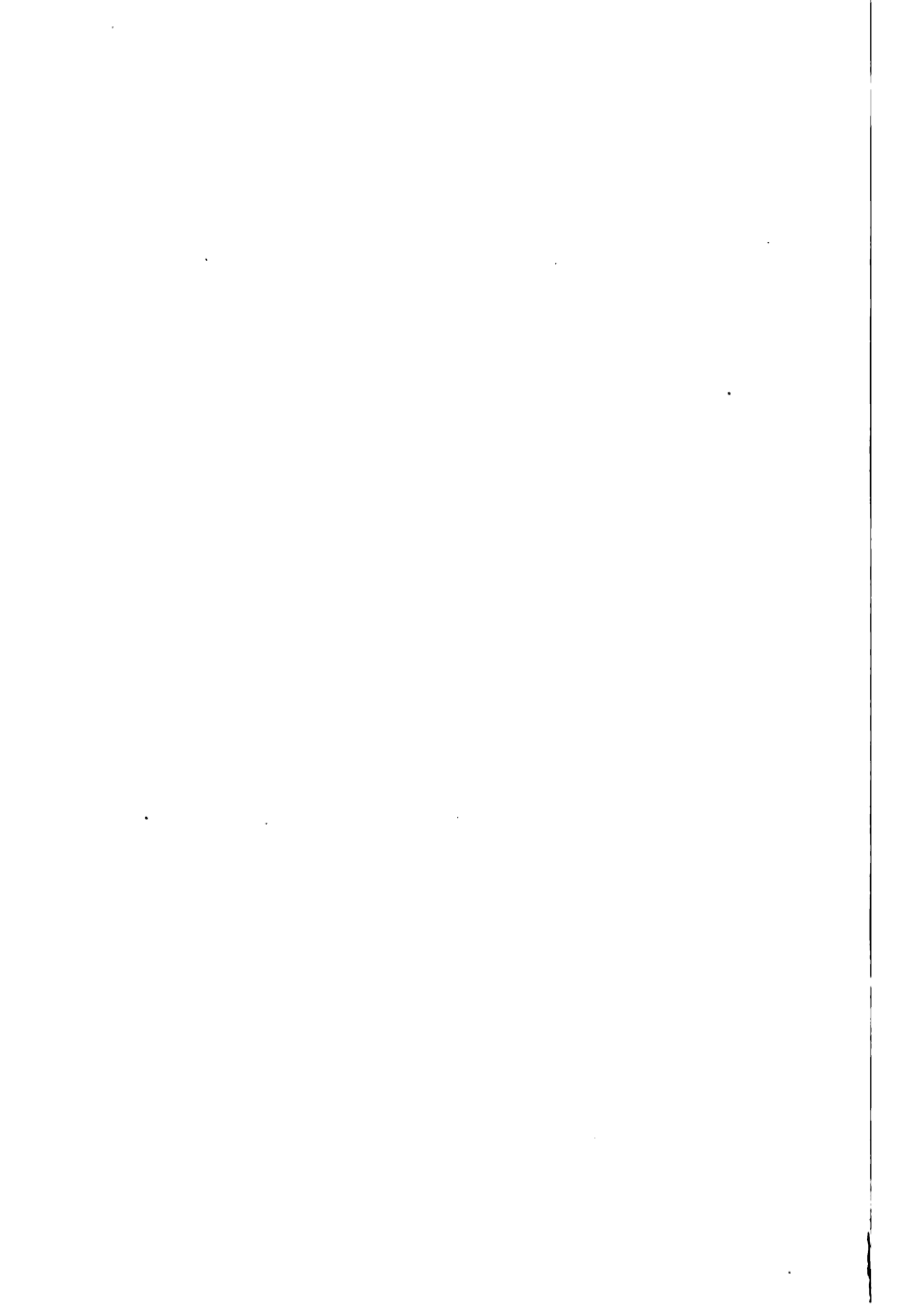
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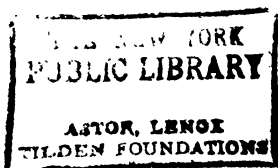
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THE CANDID ADVENTURER



THE CANDID ADVENTURER

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IN YOUR LOGGIA OVERLOOKING THE SPANISH STEPS (p. 33).

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THE CANDID ADVENTURER

BY

ANNA COLEMAN LADD

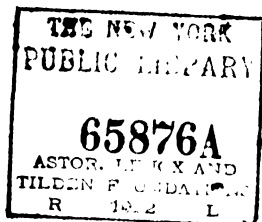
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PART I

A STUDIO IN NEW ENGLAND

Lady, you are to me like a garden enclosed

D'ANNUNZIO, *Hortus Conclusus*

THE CANDID ADVENTURER

PART I

A STUDIO IN NEW ENGLAND

I

Ah, everywhere
Are found the Gates of Things-to-Be!

KALIDASA, *Shakuntala*

“It’s this superabundance of wealth,” remarked Jerome, with a large gesture towards the pots and pans, “that will be the death of me, Ailsie! Do I really require so many shapes to cook my food in?”

His old nurse mumbled something unintelligibly Scotch, as she pig-headedly continued to range the shining “battery” around the gas-range which fitted so neatly into the horse’s stall.

Jerome himself strode back and forth, his arms full of horsehair furniture, which he deposited with a sigh of disgust just outside the stable-door.

“The rockers are for you, Ailsie. Or, I’ll help

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you make kindling-wood of them — happy thought! Kindling is dear, and rockers are cheap. No — I don't want *any* chairs in the workshop! A painter's got to keep moving. I don't want any one sitting about; and I do want all the floor-space available. — Besides, who is likely to come?" he ended disconsolately, feeling in his pocket for his pipe. Then, as though it was an habitual prayer with him: "O beata solitudo! O sola beatitudo!" he murmured.

"There's Mrs. Osborne?" said Ailsie unexpectedly. She was an excellent cook, but she had an exasperating way of hearing soliloquies, and ignoring direct questions.

Jerome fingered his pipe with the faintest indication of hope. "No," he remarked decisively. "She is a widow, with a daughter. Probably stout. Certainly old. And she's also exclusive: that is, not given to calling on impecunious young painters, from whom she rents ancestral homes." He dropped the pipe back into his pocket, as though it had lost its savour; and went into the adjoining room to stare at it, his hands stuck through the belt of his Russian blouse.

The place certainly had the possibilities of a

A NEW ENGLAND STUDIO 5

delightful studio. The golden wood of the walls, the brown beams making grooves of shadow; the big north light, full of a stormy sunset reflected in the copper jars and the Cellini shields, with weapons of the Renaissance scattered here and there, gave a curiously Old World flavour to the Colonial place. The double doors had latticed panes, surmounted by antlers; and beneath, in Gothic letters, ran the legend:

Reclusorium Anachoritae

with the ancient benediction of the hermitages, ending in the proud line: "And let there be in this place sanity, sanctity, chastity, virtue and victory."

Jerome's other side, his pagan side, joyous and pessimistic, found utterance in Horatian cries of welcome to Love and Life, or in Della Vigna's bitter lines which are so consoling to repeat on days when one sits by preference in a black hole, digging a deeper, blacker pit 'beneath one.

These scraps of antique passion paint the man as well as his home. He was one who loved play. Work to him was nothing else; and he addressed himself to it with passionate earnestness.

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But human beings make undoubtedly the best of games yet invented; and these were singularly lacking at this moment of his career. Instead, there was a grand piano which stood in unassailable dignity in a corner of the harness-room, lighted by tall church candles in sconces. There was also a tea-tray (on the floor), a pipe-rack, and a bearskin rug. Ailsie looked at it all hopelessly.

But Jerome was content. At his grandfather's death, he had inherited the fine old Colonial place in the University town, with its wide grounds and spacious stable, and having not a penny with which to keep it up, his agent had rented house and grounds to a Mrs. Osborne, who wished to spend the spring and autumn there. As she preferred to keep her motor in the garage of her town house on Beacon Street, and as Jerome, in his happy bachelor independence, needed only studio-room, it was obviously the sensible thing to make use of the empty stable. The young painter did so, with the cheerful adaptability gained from long living in foreign lands.

His childhood had been spent in Florence,

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where his father, a Virginian on the Confederate staff, came to die, a broken-hearted exile, on the heights of Fiesole. Jerome's schooling had been at Harrow and Oxford, where he had managed to spend several years in brilliant idleness, delving in ancient books, but rarely turning up for lectures. His tastes lay altogether in the Seven Liberal Arts and the humanities; but this period of dreaming was followed by one of joyously strenuous work in the studios of Paris and Rome.

With his father, he had travelled, too, across the flowery steppes of Hungary, and into the heart of Poland and Little Russia, or along the coasts of Calabria. Everywhere he sketched, joyously, rapidly, with passionate search for truth and the colour of life.

It was from all this that he was summoned at his grandfather's death to take charge, as sole heir, of the old house in Cambridge.

His New England mother, whom he had never known, was attracted to the place; and Jerome, with all his wandering blood, was a lover of homes, and gently unwilling to disturb old associations.

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He had come back full of enthusiasm for America and American ideals, determined to plant the seeds of his art in his native soil rather than in congenial fields abroad. His great friend, Montgomery Warren, was by way of despising his countrymen — of thinking that Europe was the only place for a man of taste to live in. But Jerome was made of sturdier stuff; and, though with many a pang of Rome-sickness, was determined to find in New England a land as absorbing as ever Bohemia or Spain could be, — even if he had to make it so himself.

It was not long before the young painter's motley belongings settled themselves into the corners of his Cambridge studio as though they had always belonged there. At opposite ends of the loft were two boxlike bedrooms, to which led a stairway not unlike a ladder; and from which, through trap-doors, molten lead could easily have been poured down on intruders, had the owner so desired. Other trap-doors could serve an equally useful purpose as oubliettes. In fact, the place had many of the advantages — and all of the disadvantages — of a mediæval castle. Water had to be fetched from a

faucet downstairs for Jerome's bath, which was an English affair, coloured a glad rose-pink like the inside of a watermelon, in which he splashed happily every morning and then emptied into the asparagus-bed outside. The whole place reeked picturesquely of horses and straw; and was imperfectly warmed by a big Italian brazier, which cast a glow in the corners, but was apt (unless put out before midnight) to asphyxiate the inmates. New England winters are sometimes known to be rigorous; but while Ailsie boasted an oil-stove in her bedroom (which was magnificently furnished with Early Victorian horsehair and copies of Old Masters), Jerome contented himself with a contrivance known to Tuscans as "il prete," — a kind of wooden cage, shaped like a bee-hive, in which a scaldino is hung, full of red coals. This, placed in the centre of the bed, with the blankets piled above it, diffuses a grateful warmth when the room is freezing, and leaves a glowing nest into which to creep. Jerome generally fell asleep book in hand; and every night, the faithful Ailsie crept in to carry out the "prete" and extinguish the three-wicked Tuscan lamp.

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She had been with him since his mother's death, when he was scarcely two years old; and she watched over him jealously. Jerome teased her and her cat — he hated cats — for recreation; worked all day, hungrily and happily; and railed at New England with an extraordinary fervour of imagery. He saw scarcely any one, for his only relative in Cambridge was a stately and somewhat eccentric old lady. She lived quite alone with an enormous clock, the wonder of Jerome's childhood, with weights which hung down two stories into the cellar, which was solemnly wound up once a year, on the fourth of July. Her nephew used to come dutifully over every summer for this purpose, until Jerome himself took to winding it, partly from clannish pride, partly to exhibit the growing strength of his muscles.

He was, indeed, tall and slim and tough as steel; with a pointed chin, aquiline nose, and an attractive crooked smile which made deep creases in his lean brown cheeks. His hair, brushed carefully back, shone like the sun; his eyes peered keenly and humorously under faun-brows. A voice very musical in speech, but a

A NEW ENGLAND STUDIO 11

falsest when he sang (a thing he was extremely fond of doing) was his only beauty; but there was extraordinary power in it to wheedle and cajole, to break with pity, or ring with the triumph of youth. I have only to add that this young man affected a fastidious choice of neckties, and rejoiced in a glorious blue silk-lined dotera of the latest Japanese cut.

He was alone on this late afternoon, as usual; but I do not know that solitude was as dear to him at this particular period of his career as a little later, when he could not get it. At all events, it was with a distinct sense of elation that, just as he sat down to his tea, he heard above the March wind a tapping at the lattice-paned door.

A woman's silhouette, distinguished-looking and slender, could be made out against the swaying branches. Jerome felt a premonition, which became almost immediately a certainty, that this was Mrs. Osborne herself. They had never met; and nothing had prepared him for the youthful loveliness of this face.

The big doors rolled noisily back, as he stepped out to greet her. Mrs. Osborne seemed

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disconcerted by the din, but held out her hand as she quietly named herself.

"I came to see you about the house. Something happened during the storm to-day, — a pipe burst."

"Oh, won't you come in?" Jerome pulled the doors quite unnecessarily wider, and looked anxiously out at the rain that was beginning to wet her plumes.

"Thanks. I will. You have a magnificent entrance. But I think I could have managed to get through the little door —"

Jerome laughed joyously. "You see, I had always thought of you as entering in a carriage and four. Blois would have done for you — nothing less." He watched the slender figure with growing pleasure; then added: "But the little door would have fitted perfectly. Is n't it narrow? I am sure my ancestor, like myself, hated stout people — excluded them in every way he could." He went eagerly to the tea-pot, lifted the cover, and peered in.

"But I must n't stay!" she murmured, half laughing at his total forgetfulness of the purpose of her visit. "I only stopped in passing,

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because your aunt told me where you lived; and something will have to be done at once, of course —”

Jerome looked up, greatly relieved, as Ailsie brought a fresh pot. “Of course — But you won’t go out in all that rain without some tea first, will you?”

She was nodding an affirmation, when she saw his preposterous look fall like a child’s; and then, something humorous or tender, or even merely human, made her hesitate, and change gaily to — “Just a minute, then! Though I don’t really believe you know how to make tea — I have seen your pictures in the Salon, you know!”

Jerome’s face lit up with eagerness — not about his pictures. “Oh, but I *do* know! I was taught by a Japanese philosopher and poet, who spent hours instilling the religion of it. — Have you read the Book of Tea, yourself? No? Then, as a barbarian, you will probably want cream. — Cream, Ailsie!”

“But I don’t!” protested his visitor, as Jerome sank gracefully cross-legged on the rug and motioned to the place opposite to him.

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Mrs. Osborne looked critically at the floor, which was covered, at that particular spot, by a Royal Bokhara; otherwise innocent of anything save naïf streaks of ochre. Seeing her hesitation, the painter reached for one of the leather cushions lying about, and placed it in the centre of the prayer-rug; and her acceptance of it was an act of inconceivable condescension, not fully realized by the happy young man. Princesses, before this, had sat on the floor at his studio-teas in Rome; but the situation was new to Mrs. Osborne. Through the open door came gusts of wind with scattered rain-drops; the gloom deepened, and she glanced nervously at her watch, while Jerome joyously prepared the samovar, instructing her as he proceeded.

“Always take lemon in tea. Do you like it sweet or bitter? — I mean, without sugar? (I never learned to speak English: it’s worse than Russian; and so hard to write!) But a day like this is perfect for tea —” He stopped from sheer delight in the grace of her attitude.

She looked stately and remote as a little Buddha, the grey folds of her gown like delicate

petals about her. The slender hands around the old China made Jerome lean forward absently to study them. Her voice brought him musically back. "Your great-aunt seems very proud of you."

"Perhaps," sighed Jerome; "but hardly approving. She does n't understand — all this — living in a stable, you know. Now I am, by nature, the most conventional of mortals, loving form, measure, etiquette, and stately ceremonies: the Catholic Church appeals to me; the old comedies of manners. But when a place is so exactly adapted to the ends of a worker, I ask you why —?"

Mrs. Osborne's brows were faintly ironic. "I suppose it is more satisfactory to sit in a place like this and praise conventionality?"

"*Much* more. No one hates things 'artistic' more than I do — unless it was Baudelaire — messy things, wild hair and clothes: *you* know. Conventionality is the only freedom. You can have the wildest opinions, the most eccentric mind; but because you stay on the rails, nobody bothers about the inside of your head. While, if you overstep them, there is so much confusion

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and explanation and fuss that you have no time to have ideas of any sort!"

"That is ingenious, at all events. But in Europe you are so much freer!"

"Why? It is the place of all others where tradition reigns. Yet my Italians, those lovers of form, are the freest people I ever met. They hate eccentricity, scorn pose, cant, every hypocrisy, yet are absolutely, genuinely formal; while their opinions are free as air. And here? Who dares to have an opinion? Who dares to give it, if he has one? I mean, about ideas — art — religion — the things that matter, in sum? And yet, here they are quite unshackled and sloppy. — Go away!" he shouted at the cat, who had followed Ailsie in with the three-wicked lamps. ("I hate cats — don't you? So did Maeterlinck; while Baudelaire adored them.) I myself love form so greatly — rules, order — that I would have gone into a monastery, become a Trappist, if they'd let me. Solitude, you know; and study; and silence —"

"I noted the silence," remarked his visitor.

Jerome laughed. "When you live alone with a deaf old woman *and* a cat, you chatter with

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the first delightful person who breaks in . . . *Must* you go? But you *did* break in, you know. It's a fact which I shall hug to myself forever. — Why, it's pouring!" He jumped up to look, and then turned to Mrs. Osborne with both hands spread. "What a country! It calls itself spring — and there's nothing but snow and rain! I suppose one should be grateful it does n't pour indoors."

"But that's just what it *does* do — in your house."

"In my house?"

"It drips from the ceiling." She began again patiently. "A pipe burst. That is what I came to tell you; only I could n't, somehow, get in a word." She dropped her mischievous manner, and continued more kindly: "What a bore for you!"

Jerome put down his cup, wrinkling his forehead. "There goes my trip to Bermuda. Never mind, the plumber will take it. — Which room did you say?"

"The music-room, the loveliest one. Is n't it too bad!"

"Oh, well. I hated those grey walls. I'll do

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it over for you myself — I'm a painter, you know; have only done small things, so far, not houses: but here's my chance. — By George!" He clapped a hand to his forehead.

Mrs. Osborne looked up apprehensively.

"It's only an idea. May I smoke on it?"

He sat down cross-legged again; lit a cigarette, after she had declined one; and meditated.

Mrs. Osborne, whose faint smile seemed to marvel at her own patience, sat quite still. The storm howled; and through the doors, which Ailsie had closed, crept a little draught, scattering the flames of the samovar and of the brass lamps, and making her shiver.

"I must be going," she murmured; summoned something brilliant as a last remark, rejected it as she noted his absorbed, averted face, and made a motion to rise. In this, she was not successful; and she laughed, "Why, I cannot move. I may have to stay here for ever!"

Jerome looked up at this with quiet fervour: "If you only would! You can't think what a lot of things there are I want to talk to you about — now that the kindness of Fate has sent you to me, and thanks to its white hand! — I know

so little of my own country: and I want to learn. I was thinking, for instance, of getting married—" He paused, drawing his brows together to concentrate on this novel problem; then casting it off, with relief, on his new friend,—"You must advise me about that. You see, I have no one dependent on me; and a man ought to be rangé at my age—twenty-seven! I am not difficile à vivre, I believe. And I want some one—very pretty—who will help me to find myself, with whom I can *grow* and make discoveries and—well, live! It's interesting here; but frightfully lonely. In Europe, I did n't seem to feel the need—you know: one does n't over there; it's so beautiful, and sad; one's self is nothing. But now, I'm an American, and I want to make myself a life here—have a hearth—children—and all that. Of course, I have n't any money; but I can paint. People of sorts have believed in me—" He frowned, gazing into the twilight.

Mrs. Osborne watched him quite breathlessly, wondering if she dared laugh. He was perfectly serious. "Your great-aunt," she began, feeling relief in the sound of the com-

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fortable words, "prepared me — but not completely."

"You mean, you had not heard of me before! That does, I fear, argue yourself unknown!"

"You must remember my obscure life in Aix and the Back Bay. Your aunt made allowances." She did laugh then.

Jerome joined in sympathetically, as though just waking to a delightful fact. "Why, yes; she entered into my marrying project quite eagerly; only, she insisted on picking out the girl — and what do you suppose she chose? — an 'artistic' soul who painted chair-backs or something —" He shuddered. "Fancy marrying anything like that! I'm not intellectual, — are you? — and I loathe Arts and Crafts." He looked quite unhappy, until he caught her eye. "But my aunt did n't prepare me for you! I thought you would be very formidable, even venerable. — Think of her speaking of you, and never telling me you were beautiful! — Women are queer!"

He lit a fresh cigarette joyfully; and Mrs. Osborne, with perfect finality and gracefulness, rose to her feet.

Jerome looked up with a start. "Not going?" — imploringly, as though he fully expected her to stay all night. "But it's still pouring!"

"If you'll add to your hospitality the loan of an umbrella —" She was completely at her ease again; and Jerome accompanied her to the door with a sense of the falling of a curtain.

"An umbrella? But I have none — not one! I left Ailsie's at the Art Museum; and my own, with a rather pretty girl whom I saw peering anxiously from a doorway. — She had really lovely eyes," he added piously.

"Otherwise, no umbrella!"

"Of couse, one would do anything for a pretty person; especially here. And people with eyes like that can always be trusted."

"I doubt if you ever see your property again."

"Now I don't. That's where we differ. Though I doubt pretty much everything but faces. They're my trade."

She passed royally out into the shower, her plumes held high, her little feet stepping with-

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out hesitation down the muddy path. Jerome followed, bareheaded, as far as the gate, gesticulating as though his energy could keep the rain from touching her.

II

The morning is the time for all efforts . . . the youth of the day, when everything is bright, fresh and easy of attainment.

SCHOPENHAUER

VERY early the next morning, which rose like the first day in Paradise, Jerome stood in the sunny doorway of his studio gazing across at the white-columned house through a tender film of green.

"It's spring, Ailsie!" he shouted. "Oh, I am so hungry! — Do you think it's too early to call on her?"

The old nurse put a hand to her ear. "Is it calling you would be, at cock-crow?"

Jerome placed an arm around her shoulder. "Ailsie, Ailsie, why did n't you tell a fellow how very bonny she is?"

"Bonny, is it?" Ailsie looked worried. "Master Jerome, come and drink your coffee. — Up before breakfast, too! A body would think you in love."

"Perhaps I am. Do you know any remedy for it, in all your herbarium of simples?"

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"I never heard of any that counted. But I know one that would be the very thing for you now, to cool the fever in the blood in the spring-time."

"And what's that? Serpent's milk?"

"It's a tea of young nettles, with cream: a delicate dish. But they say you can't get them in this country. Many's the time I've given the brew —"

"How about your hands? Did you wear gauntlets?"

"Nay, nay; a nettle is like a young maid, —

"Grasp it like a man of mettle,
And it soft as silk remains.'"

Jerome pondered this wisdom, pipe in mouth. Ailsie had planted her hands on her hips, and, with head on one side, was gazing off at the fields. The young man hoped for more advice on the subject uppermost in his own mind; for, except Transubstantiation, there was no subject on which Ailsie loved more to hold forth than matrimony. She had been married herself at fifteen, had led a most unhappy life, and was eager for every one to enter into the bond. The part Jerome loved most to hear about was when

she told how she became engaged to "a puir laddie." Her brother was one of the richest inn-keepers in the Highlands and had betrothed her to a major of dragoons. The soldier, who was six foot two, had, according to her, met the news of her engagement by clutching the rail of the bridge and demanding what she meant. When her meaning was made clear to him, he "fainted dead away."

This true lover was to Jerome, for many years, an example of the terrific force of the passion; and he was no more surprised by it than the little Scotch lassie had been. He hoped, indeed, that he would feel as strongly as that himself some day; though he might never be able to faint away, having vainly tried to do so once, at the dentist's.

Ailsie's next remark, however, threw little light on the subject.

"It's a frightful waste, Master Jerome; and sure, you should leave off buying them curlies and pick dandylions: they are a fashionable dish, and expensive, too; and lovely with cream."

"Could n't we cut out the butcher entirely,"

24 THE CANDID ADVENTURER

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suggested Jerome mildly, "and just live on pulse and herbs? I'd have more money for colours then; and I'm sure that would cure me — if anything could. It's this springtime! — All the air is full of lilacs!"

"Not lilacs, laddie: but ye ne'er kent one flower from the ither."

"Well, rhododendrons, then. — Who's that?"

A small boy was coming up the path, bearing an umbrella and a letter.

Jerome read; slapped his knee; and jumped for his hat.

"Did n't I tell her so? I never make a mistake about eyes. — Ailsie, what *is* the con-founded time now?"

"Near upon ten minutes to eight," — peering in at the kitchen-clock.

"Oh, you're always late: it *must* be eight. At all events, I'm going!" and without turning, he strode down the wet path.

A robin sang; and he stopped, nose in air, and eyes ecstatically closed. At the white door, a startled manservant in striped waistcoat and shirt-sleeves paused in his polishing, to survey him with haughty suspicion.

"Is Mrs. Osborne at home?" inquired Jerome in his most suave and formal tones.

"Yes — no —"

"Kindly take her this card, and ask if she can see Mr. Leigh a moment."

The man went down through the garden; and Jerome strolled to the end of the porch and lit a cigarette. Something was scenting the warm walls — freesias in window-boxes, perhaps — "or lilies, or flower-de-luces," muttered Jerome, who enjoyed the names of flowers even when misapplying them. A few tender blossoms like snow-flakes clung to the black boughs.

"Oh, this spring!" he murmured aloud; — "oh, reluctant, cruel, parsimonious, puritanical New England spring!"

"Don't abuse her, or she will go in again," said a mocking voice beneath him.

Jerome swung around, and saw, coming down the path towards him, the clearest, freshest figure, with dark hair rippling on a beautiful brow, head tilted back, and the motion of one who moves to inner music.

"How good of you, marquise! Am I frightfully early? I *had* to tell you —"

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"I am an early riser; but I do not generally see any one till lunch-time."

He bent and kissed her hand; feeling it startle as he did so; then the slight frown disappeared.

"You've been worrying about that stupid plumbing, of course."

Jerome looked bewildered, then radiant. "Of course, I'll attend to all that. — But, you know, she *did* return it!"

"Who? What?"

"The umbrella. This morning." His tone was triumphant. "With a nice little note, very grateful and somewhat sarcastic, as to my 'probably not knowing enough to come in out of the rain.' She may have been a chorus-girl; but you see, I *was* right about the eyes!"

"Perhaps —" Mrs. Osborne seemed dubious. "But I must go now, unless —"

"The plumbing! I *did* forget all about it, — idiot! Let's go and see it now."

He followed her into the music-room, peering anxiously at up the rusty streaks extending across the ceiling.

"Ha! this will be fine!" His voice was full of content. "Those stains, up there, suggest all

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sorts of things, like the battles Leonardo saw on old walls. I could lie here for hours and see landscapes — long, flat — with clouds, repeating, after their chameleon-fashion, the lines of the country beneath them.”

“Do you think it will require many coats?” asked Mrs. Osborne.

“Oh, I shall attend to all that! House-painters are so expensive, you know. I’ll prepare the cartoons now. And oh, the joy of that lunette!”

He went forward to measure with his eye the low-vaulted ceiling. It had been formerly a ballroom, and had a raised dais at one end. He turned to Mrs. Osborne radiantly: —

“Can’t you see Spring there? — a New England Spring, very young and shy, with floating draperies, — greys and mauves, and robin-egg blues; clouds floating across the ceiling towards the dawn; and music everywhere — gathered in the corners — poets, painters, gypsies, children — half-lost in the mists, heralding her?”

Mrs. Osborne looked ruefully at the stains. “It will take some time?”

“All summer,” replied Jerome cheerfully.

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"I'll run up a scaffolding here. And I know just the model for that 'Spring'; a wonderful little Polish girl, slim as a boy, whom I painted in Rome. I must get hold of her somehow. I wonder if she'd come?"

He hurried off, preoccupied. At the door, remembering suddenly, he looked back.

"Plumbers and things will be over at once, of course. And—thanks, most awfully, for letting me know!"

III

Largior hic campos æther et lumine vestit
[Purpurio.

VIRGIL

"OH, Golda, oh, Golda," wrote Jerome, "I have such a plan! Paint, my girl, and more paint; an idea of sorts; and only you in the whole world to carry it out with me.

"You see, when your last reticent little note from Rome told me of Monty's departure for New York, I felt partly responsible. You know my ideas, and that I have been hammering away at Monty for months to cease being an Italianate, and turn out his stuff in his native land. The fact that you would pose only for us, since taking up that work a year ago, makes me only the more anxious; and I've been racking my stupid brains for a solution.

"I know what starving in Rome means, — only too well. In the first place, one does n't care over-much — one's too happy and desperate, and it's all so beautiful; and now and then, a chap goes over the Pincian Wall, when the scirocco blows.

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"That's all very well, for him. But youth gets sapped.

" 'Too well I know the poison and the sting
Of things too sweet.'

"This slow poison, distilled into one's veins, makes one choose rather to be sick and starving in Rome than prospering anywhere else — 'Est quædam etiam dolendi voluptas.'"

"But all that's got to stop, and at once. Here, you won't get the singing, the laughter and tears, the splashes of sunlight and orange-trees — but you'll get well. Come to this bleak New England. I'll explain just how it's to be done.

"My faithful old Scotch nurse has a sister living in Cambridge who takes boarders, — a motherly soul. Monty, like me, had n't a penny (though *he's* bound to be rich and stout some day!) or we would have brought you over. But now, all this is changed.

"Spring came; and a pipe burst. A music-room is to be repainted. — This would n't pay for even a steerage-ticket, since I'm doing it for my own particular joy in my own ancient house. But Mrs. Osborne, who has rented it, happened

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to like my 'Riders' at the Salon, and has commissioned me to paint her little girl. This, with my 'Boy with a Horse,' now sold, will bring you triumphantly to me, to pose for the 'New England Spring.'

"So, Golda, best of comrades, it lies with you to make me paint what I see in this wonderful fresco. It will take all summer — your part. There are lilacs and wistaria here, in masses. Mrs. McAllister will take good care of you. I'm sending you a return-ticket, knowing how Rome-sick you get; and when the hot months are over, you will be back in your loggia overhanging the Spanish Steps."

He stopped, mused a while; reopened the letter, which he had forgotten to sign, and wrote as a postscript: "I believe I am falling in love with New England!"

The wonderful hour in the studio was never repeated. Having twice seen the lady of his dreams, Jerome imagined he was entering on some halcyon period when at any time that life seemed too wonderful, or an idea suggested itself, or a tree broke into blossom, or a quaint

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bit of human nature unfolded itself, he had but to look over a garden-wall and the Ideal Listener would be ready to come to him.

He often felt like that wistfully lonely soul in "Pelléas": "I must go and say something to somebody" . . . But, though he might have so much to tell, and so much to give, the somebody was more of an unreality than his dreams.

It is true that the little girl came with her governess, and sedately sat for him each day: haunting him with the young and sweet resemblance of fourteen years to the sad, remote beauty in the mother's face. But the child's reserve had to give away before Jerome's enchanting fairy-stories, which he told as passionate adventures that had happened to his prototype Hieronymus in the fifteenth century. Why in the fifteenth century, he would have been at a loss to explain, save that this period was very vivid to him, and the people very much alive. He spoke off-hand of having met such fascinating personages as Carpaccio's young lords, or Botticelli's ladies, or Madonna Beatrice Sforza. To his hearer they became more real than the people about her.

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Muriel Osborne was unlike the children of her age in Boston. Whether owing to the winters spent with her mother in Paris, where she saw little of children and much of an over-sophisticated society, she seemed to Jerome to be as old, or somewhat older, than himself. He loved to play with her, to help her plant her flower-beds, or tell her stories, because the grave eyes seemed to see too much for a happy child; and he instinctively wished to keep her in a land of faëry. The child closely followed these adventures of Hieronymus, remarking that her Uncle Fred had never told her anything like them; while the governess sat with hands straining at each other, like one half-starved, afraid to touch strange food.

That Mrs. Osborne never once showed any curiosity as to the progress of the portrait, both piqued and pleased him. He had no intention of having his idea interfered with; yet, there were things he would have liked to talk over with her, as one having the key to the enigmatic little girl. The enigma, however, was as potent in the mother as in the daughter, and more baffling; since he felt that the child's shyness

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concealed real feeling, while the mother's might easily be either a polished, impenetrable surface, or the depths of a well of understanding. In either case, all that he was able to make out was the reflection of his own mocking face, somewhat disillusionizing, altogether distasteful. It was a question whether his persistence in seeking her was due to a love of knowledge, or the determination to paint, on that clear surface, a picture of himself after his own heart.

Baffled vanity as the source of a great passion struck Jerome as being too amusing to be gay; and gaiety, he had long determined, was to be the keynote of his life and of his work: since everything divine moves on light feet.

He had lived much with men, had been brought up by a man, and had worked too hard to feel more than the passing glamour of women. But he thought much on the subject: almost invariably wrong. His information was derived from Latin authors and the legends of chivalry; but a jesting spirit counteracted that easily exalted imagination; and some clever older women in Paris had taken pains to form the

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boy's tastes, while they had managed to keep him unspoilt.

His code was simple. He loved good wine, dancing, music; above all, colour. He hated cruelty; he saw people rather naked, dropping from them all exterior signs of rank or pretence, while remaining—at heart—a passionate aristocrat, or lover of the best in every form of life. Some danger there was of his drifting in pleasant places, for he had an almost limitless capacity for “doing nothing,” as it is called—in other words, dreaming. But there was beneath this a bulldog tenacity of purpose, of sticking to a thing until he had put it through, which obstacles only served to strengthen. This was the quality which made him ultimately win in the battle of life. For though he died before he had time to realize his fame, he always lived triumphantly, getting the utmost of passion and pleasure from every moment.—So count him a happy man, the rarest object on this planet.

Happy Chance, indeed, befriended him, he considered, when one clear evening, he saw Mrs. Osborne coming across the Harvard Bridge, towards him. She must make up for all the

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weary weeks which had followed their first meeting. He could not conceive, when those hours had been so undoubtedly enjoyable, why they had never been repeated.

She was looking a little to one side, with the elaborate unconcern of one who knows herself watched; and as Jerome lifted his hat, she hesitated before turning to greet him.

"Muriel tells me you are better than the Green Fairy-Book."

"Oh, but so is she! — May I walk a little way?"

"If you do not mind turning back towards the Embankment. I've sent the motor home and the ground is full of puddles."

"But look at the gold in them!" He strode gloriously by her side. The east wind blew keenly across the water, stinging their cheeks, and fluttering Mrs. Osborne's draperies about her perfect knees. — So Jerome felt, and declared: to be met by a startled frown.

"Oh, must n't I say that? It's so wonderful — like the frieze of the Mænads. O Lady Præpotent, why, why can't I enjoy it like the sunset and the hills? For instance, your gown,

— it is perfect, the art of it, with long, long lines so sweetly flowing. — Callot? Premet?”

“You preposterous youth, — what do you know of Premet?”

“Why,” carelessly, “I know most of the artists worth while. I designed a gown for her once, for a friend of mine. It had a succès fou at Longchamps; and my fortune would have been made forever, had I not, alas! adored the nude.”

“I don’t believe a word of it!” said Mrs. Osborne promptly.

Jerome’s eyes danced. “I’ll show you something I wear myself then. See there!”

He held out a heavy seal ring engraved with three crests. “That was sent to Scott by Lord Byron, when he was dying in Greece. It came into our family through the Noels — See, between the Gordon and the Byron crests? — It’s my most precious possession.”

“I should think so!” She returned it cordially; discovering that, in spite of herself, she believed him.

Jerome put it thoughtfully back on his finger. “I wore it, with a guard, when I was quite a

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little chap. I thought I might need it some day, like Essex: to send to the Queen when my life was endangered, you know. Only *she* never got it; and so he was condemned unheard. . . . You never would do that, would you?"

"Do what?" demanded Mrs. Osborne, amused.

"Condemn a man, until he had had a chance of justifying himself. In some hour of bitter need, I may send it to you. — Will you promise to hear me then?"

"I always feel," she laughed, "as though I were living in the sixteenth century with you."

"Fifteenth," murmured Jerome, who had no doubt of it. "Why not? We would have been frightfully happy."

"But it is the twentieth — and I, alas! have a New England conscience!"

"Ah, madonna, that Conscience of yours is precisely as young as you are; though she *will* sit up stiffly and pretend to be eighty! She has bandaged her eyes for fear of seeing the joy that is calling to her; and her lips are always saying 'Don't!'"

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"What a horrid person! But you know nothing whatever about her."

"Perhaps not," retorted Jerome serenely. "Don't let's have her always chaperoning us! — I thought you did n't need chaperones in this country?"

"That's because we always carry one inside us."

"Do you? — Poor, poor people! I've always had such wonderful companions to play with: paladins, valkyries, goddesses. — I remember a dream I had once, as a boy, of floating down the river Xanthus, a wounded Argive warrior, right into the heart of the sunset. I could feel the pain of the spear-head in my side, the languor of a spent body; and then, an almost unearthly happiness, as the boat glided on, without sail or rudder, with the silver-footed goddess, Thetis, standing erect in the bow, divine and aloof and compassionate, leading me into the land of silence. . . . Such dreams as these leave a nostalgia, madonna, never to be quite forgotten."

"I know it," she said gently. "Was it more beautiful than this?"

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He looked up then, across the river-basin to the blue jagged outline of the city against a heliotrope sky; and caught his breath with pleasure. The little golden dome shone like a misty crown; jewels of orange light from the dying sunset lit up the windows as by an inner fire.

“Not Nürnberg or Stockholm could be more lovely!” — pausing in his Latin way, every few steps, to emphasize his pleasure. — “See the way that dome of the Shoe Factory is massed up, drowned in blue mists and looming like a headland! — You know, when one comes across a thing like that, which Monet or Whistler would make us worship, I feel I could build me a tower on the river-bank, and spend the rest of my life painting it. And I would,” he went on musingly, “did I not love so much more the human form, the look in human eyes. Youth — not only gay but old — that looks out of an older face, like a bird behind bars.”

“Dreamer!” Mrs. Osborne nervously broke the spell with a laugh that sweetly jarred. “You see in every woman a princess in disguise; in every contented bourgeois, a soul longing to be free!”

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“And if I do — ” he swung his stick, “it’s not so very often. It would be worse to have it there, and not to see it, would n’t it? I have met a good many princesses in disguise, — one a poor little invalid in Moscow; — but a good many more cooks, dressed up as princesses. — Artists are called dreamers, because their eyes are tremendously wide open, while the rest of the world sleeps. They see the earth as it looks at dawn: every blade and twig standing out so keenly, vividly, against the sky, that a tear in a leaf will show; and the purple boles writhe in terrific realism. They see ten times more clearly than ordinary people: but then, it is all transfigured by the unearthly loveliness of dawn.”

“Ah, there you have it! ‘The light that never was’ —”

“Keats said that because it was so incredible. But I have seen that light.”

She turned and walked back with swinging step; her face raised to the wind. Jerome watched it intently a while. Then —

“Listen a little; would you do a wonderful thing with me? Come to the opera one night this week, when Puccini is sung, and up in what

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the Italians call Paradise. There only the poor musicians and exiles and intellectuals go — and you will hear what a difference! You hang over the edge of the balcony, like the Blessed Damsel, and see all the tiny little dolls down below, dressed up (some of them), sitting very primly in their velvet cases. And then the curtains roll apart and a voice pours out and soars and soars — All the music rolling through the vaulted heaven around you and into your very soul . . .”

The little line he so knew came between her brows. “There is nothing I should love more; but I have engagements all this week; and next week, some English friends are coming to stay with me.”

“I see,” said Jerome. — “What a lovely thing smoke is! Look, over there, how it rolls up so vigorously, buoyantly, tinged with amethyst and gold, to melt in the purer sky! I don’t know but what, after all, it would be more fascinating to paint a railroad station.”

IV

You may discern the shape of loveliness
More perfect in her tears than in her smiles.
She's sad as one long used to 't . . .

and her silence,
Methinks, expresseth more than if she spake.

WEBSTER'S *Duchess of Malfi*

PRECISELY five days later, Jerome found a small stamped envelope with a thin black edge lying on his breakfast-tray, — for I regret to state the young man had the evil Continental habit of taking his coffee in bed. This luxurious custom contrasted with his severe monastic pallet, above which ran a shelf of books “bounden in black and red,” and a frieze of green burlap on which were fastened the photographs of some favourite Greek god, or Russian Satan, or Paris gargoyle, according to the mood of the moment.

He smoothed his hair back carefully and opened the letter. At the very first glance, its non-committal perfection, thin writing and lack of perfume told him that it could only come from his perfect Mrs. Osborne, or one of her six hundred sisters.

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"She asks me to her box," he mumbled. "'Tosca,' Wednesday night, at eight. Of course, she has a box! What an idiot she must have thought me. Heigho!"

"Dear Mrs. Osborne," wrote Jerome, forgetting in his English way the "my" — "I am more than kind to think of me; but I cannot come."

He walked two blocks to a post-office to deposit this. Then he looked over her garden-

"How high it is!" he sighed. "I can't climb over it; and if I did, I'd stifle on the other side — Walls, walls!"

He went to the Opera-House that Wednesday night, and hung over the balustrade, — like the Blessed Damozel, — gazing at one of the tiny dolls, beautifully gowned, that shone like a pearl in its crimson case, to the complete extinction of "Tosca." The loveliness of the small Greek head and the noble shoulders from above, the distinction, the grace of the figure made a lump rise in his throat.

"And, but for my cursed obstinacy, I would have been there beside her!" He leaned forward to see who the luckier men might be.

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There was a rather plain and badly dressed woman next to her, and behind, her brother Fred, then a freshman at Harvard, and two older men. One of these seemed curiously familiar to Jerome.

"Ian Campbell, by George! How did *he* get here? I must try and see him."

In the second entr'acte, when the whole house, which had not moved when the corridors were empty, poured into the stifling turmoil of the foyer, Jerome wandered about, as far from Mrs. Osborne's box as he could bear to get.

He was rewarded by catching sight of his Scottish friend sipping orangeade at the bar.

"Ian!"

"Why, *Jerrom*, old chap!"

"How the devil —"

"Simply that Evelyn wanted to see her family; and I naturally followed — a steamer or two later. We're spending a week with Mrs. Osborne in Cambridge before returning to Boston. — No drinks here, eh?"

"With Mrs. —"

"Osborne. I'll introduce you. Cousin of Evelyn's; ripping woman."

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"Thanks; I've met her: beautiful, is n't she? — Look here, can you lunch with me at the Harvard Club to-morrow? Drinks enough there!"

"Think I can. Some kind of a hen-party on at home, so I'll get out. You won't come to her box?"

"Thanks; there's the bell. But, see here, Ian!"

The young Scotchman was already lost in the crowd. It had occurred to Jerome that it would be better not to mention the meeting to Mrs. Osborne; then, he shrugged his shoulders: "Too complicated!" and went up to his seat.

Ian Campbell — what memories the name brought back! Harrow on the Hill, Magdalen, a vacation spent at a shooting-box in the Highlands, where his father and Ian's, the old earl, lifelong friends, spent the last happy weeks of their lives together, tramping over the moors. Since Ian's marriage to an American girl, they had rarely met, though he had been urged repeatedly to come to the castle.

Memories and a new loneliness filled him as he brooded over the dark house, out of which

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one face rose dimly, like an antique ikon against a faintly glowing background.

How that face had come to mean, to him, all the glamour of his past life in the Old World, all the promise of the New! In its exquisite finish, the pride of race was the same as that which made the women of the old régime play cards as they awaited the summons to the guillotine.

She would conduct herself with a beautiful serenity in odd surroundings; but never would she seek out those surroundings for herself. A novel sensation could not be indulged in twice. If such people wished for excitement, there was New York; there was, more obviously, Paris. It could never occur to them to seek adventure in Cambridge; to consider that they might find at their own doors the very spirit of the old *Chansons de Gestes* or of the *Odyssey*. To Jerome, who found romance lurking under every star and flower, nay, behind every brick wall, it seemed inconceivable that she would not return to his adorable workshop, to turn over Pergolesi's songs, or the Chinese Lyrics, or muse on the wonderful faces of Old Masters. Eliminating himself, there was stuff there to start

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dreaming. . . . What could she get from him in a box, or at a luncheon? Why throw away the gold and take the tinsel?

A wholesome laugh at the comparison carried Jerome out of the Opera-House and towards the river-bank. He often walked till dawn. There was no particular reason for him to go home; and Boston was beautiful at night.

"And a jolly good place to live in," he remarked to himself as he swung over the bridge. "Bracing. Steadying. No enervating warmth, nor luxury, nor intoxicants. No frivolities. No temptations. It's like Heaven, when you come down to it — or up to it. I would n't exchange with Ian, at all events. I'm free, can work tout mon saoul; no one to nag me . . . Perfect bliss, — except when one has a cold. Then, one does long for wife and children."

He leaned over the parapet, looking across at the beautiful low span of the opposite bridge, whose daffodil lights were reflected in shining pillars of magic palaces below. There was no one in sight: and he watched the dark water flowing beneath him for a long time, whistling cheerfully.

V

Je suis belle, et j'ordonne
Que pour l'amour de moi vous n'aimiez que le Beau.
Je suis l'Ange gardien, la Muse et la Madone.

BAUDELAIRE

"MRS. OSBORNE'S compliments, and these almond-blossoms from the greenhouse." The old Scotch gardener handed in a basketful of fragrance, which Jerome received with open arms, as though it were a baby.

"Ailsie, Ailsie, what shall I do with 'em? How delicious!" — sniff, sniff; "I have n't a vase in the place! We'll fill that copper basin in the corner. — Oh, McCarthy, here's for you!" The thin coating of ice on the river of his spirits broke then, and down came the tumbling waters.

The whole studio was fragrant. Ian, lounging on the uncomfortable cushions, blowing blue rings, smiled sardonically.

"Very pretty, indeed! Why don't you jump in and win her, Jerome, my boy?"

The painter contemplated a flower effect with head on one side.

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"Because Ice-Queens do not let themselves fall in love, my lord!"

"She was married once before, wasn't she?"

Jerome flushed. "Very young, I believe: and only for a year."

The earl could not help laughing. "At all events, Lawrence Osborne was more impetuous than you are, eh?"

"Don't know," Jerome said shortly. "I never inquired."

The Scotchman went on imperturbably: "She's top-hole. I told her, by the way, that I was taking you off to Florida duck-shooting, and she seemed surprised I knew you."

"Yes," returned Jerome evasively. "I have n't seen her since you came."

"Well, she wants you to come to lunch tomorrow. Asked me to urge you — to beg you —" The big Scotchman added whimsically: "She seems rather afraid of you?"

"Absurd! As far as that goes, she's a perfect match for me —"

"Just what I contend!" —

"— in wits! You will never catch her un-

awares. If I could only find out what she thinks about things, what she enjoys! —”

“You won’t. People here are so afraid of admiring, by some impish chance, the Wrong Thing, that they down everything under two thousand years old. — Rum place!”

Jerome laughed. “Oh, come; they take wild leaps in the dark sometimes. — Look at me! — though I am half-starved.”

“I do. I contemplate you with awe and amazement, all day long. You’re an ungrateful beggar! You don’t know what these people do for you, that they would n’t do for their own brothers. Don’t I know? I married ’em! — Are you, or are you not, coming to lunch?”

“I am not,” said Jerome.

“That’s a nice reply to send to a lady!”

Jerome picked up his palette and squeezed some cadmium on it. “Got to finish a sketch I began out-of-doors. But I’ll come to Florida with you. — Muriel can rest her little back; and I can start the ‘New England Spring’ as soon as that model of mine arrives from Italy.”

He was longing to be alone now, to write to Her of all the joy and gratitude that came

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surging up whenever he caught sight of the almond-blossoms. Their perfume mingled and was drowned in pipe-smoke the rest of that afternoon, for Jerome, after getting rid of his friend, could not tear himself away from the place.

He wrote a sonnet: and wisely tore it up. He wrote what proved to be an essay — “A Love-Essay” — why not? — a scientifico-poetico-historical-semi-religious, altogether-human essay. This also disappeared into the brazier: making a far more cheerful flame than its subject.

Finally, at dusk, he sat down to his piano and, removing his ring, allowed his long hands to wander caressingly over the keys . . . A Pastorale of Scarletti, quaint and naïf, when the world was young; then a jump to Debussy; finally pure Jerome, as he composed an air to the words in the “Lute of Jade”:—

“Last night, within my chamber’s gloom, some vague
light breath of Spring,
Came wandering and whispering, and bade my soul
take wing.

.

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"Oh! Chiang Nan's a thousand miles, yet in a moment's space,
I've flown away to Chiang Nan and touched a dreaming face."

Over the low hedge that separated their places, Jerome caught sight of a slender figure in grey, stooping to touch the narcissi in their beds. In the twilight, her face seemed turned towards the studio, and she stood quite motionless until the music ceased.

Jerome, in the dark room, played on and on; pouring out his gratitude as simply as a bird: for her beauty, for her candour, for the flowers that expressed her, for the joy she gave in moving, in laughing, in existing. And he told it in the language which he instinctively felt was the only one in the world that would never frighten her. . . .

This was the only letter of thanks received by Mrs. Osborne. The next day, Jerome and the earl left for Florida.

VI

She angers my heart . . . My lot from her is a folding-up of love after its out-spreading.

AL HAKIRI

"It's all so ugly," moaned Golda, shuddering; "and so cold!"

"I know, I know." Jerome, sitting on the boarding-house sofa beside her, patted the quivering hands of his little Polish model in a grandfatherly way. His glance swept the stuffy parlour which he had chosen for her, with its pampas-grass and Rogers groups, and came back to the childish figure on the sofa. They spoke in Italian.

"You poor little thin thing! Heaven knows, I adore thinness; but you must do nothing now but eat and sit in the sun — if it ever shines!"

She smiled at him gratefully. "I could n't eat on the boat, where they had five meals a day; and in Rome I had only an appetite. I posed no more after you left, but gave piano-lessons. And Rome in summer, you know. . . . But when may I come to your workshop? Is it too

late now? I am longing to see the portrait of the child. If it is half as good as the 'Riders'!"

"Much better than that old thing!" sniffed Jerome; and boyishly eager: "All right; get on a hat and come. Heavens! it's good to be again with a chap who cares about things! You always were like another boy, you know."

They hurried over to his place, chattering happily. Golda, slim and light of foot, ran gaily through the door. As it had grown dark, Jerome snatched up a lamp and held its wavering light over the large canvas.

"Come!" he called impatiently, as Golda lingered with little cries of delight over the studio.

When finally she stood before the painting, she was quite still for a while.

"Well?" cried the young man.

She caught her breath. "What a haunting little face!— You were right, caro; you have gone beyond the 'Riders.' But it breaks one's heart, somehow. Has *she* seen it,— the mother?"

"Not yet," Jerome said moodily. "Mrs.

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Osborne has no regard for me as a man; and far too exaggerated a regard for me as a painter." He bit his lip. "She says she is no critic: she only knows what she likes —"

"I know," murmured Golda.

"And so, would rather see it finished at the exhibition. But I insisted she should come here first. There might be something —"

"Why do you care?" demanded Golda fiercely.

"Ah, but I do!" He took a turn about the room and paused before her uncertainly: "What if she should n't like it?"

"Then leave it as God and you made it! — Don't you know when you have done a true piece of work? This — what you call? — feminine country has unmanned you."

Jerome flushed. "Other people I've worked for were not consulted. But she's different. It *must* appeal to her, Golda. She's exquisite."

The little Pole was silent. Then, "When is she coming?"

"To-morrow early." He smiled faintly. "Come over at twelve and pick up the remains!"

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When Golda appeared the next morning, the sun was shining, and she showed in response to it a little colour in her cheeks. Her tawny hair was gathered under a small black hat and veil, and from her severe, chic little coat, lace emerged over her slender wrists. She stopped outside the open door of the studio and peered into the cool, dim place.

"Where you gone to?" she called in her broken English. "Are you dead, Hierome?"

A shaggy head raised itself from a pair of crossed arms; and Jerome rose from the piano-stool, took a few angry strides, and, turning his back, — "Oh, good-morning, Golda. — I only wish I were!"

Golda sat down on the rug, tucked her ankles beneath her, and said placidly, "Baby!"

There was no reply.

Her glance, wandering about, suddenly caught sight of an empty picture-frame. She sprang to her feet and shook the man by the shoulder.

"Jerome! What have you done to that portrait?"

"There was nothing else to be done, Golda."

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The life seemed to have died out of his voice. "She came early this morning. She seemed very nervous. I said nothing, but went over and uncovered the picture. She gave a cry: 'Oh, I can't bear it!' — and covered her eyes with her hands. Then, as I implored: 'You mean, it is not the little Muriel?' 'So like!' — She was trembling. — 'But it is that look, that look! — tragic; lonely — My child can look like that!' — There were tears in her eyes, Golda, Golda! — I went mad. I said, 'It's only what *I* saw there, you know; *my* idea of the child. But it no longer exists!' I ripped it out of the frame, and threw it away; and she turned without a word and left the studio. — That's all."

Golda sat quite still, her cigarette gone out. Jerome mechanically turned to the piano and began to strike some chords.

Then the little Pole jumped up, searched for the mangled canvas and spread it out. "But she's a murderess!" she muttered — and, bending over it: "The beautiful, beautiful thing!"

Jerome laughed, and pulled out his pipe.

Realizing that the lunch-hour had come and gone, Golda dragged herself over to the tea-tray and began to boil some water. Ailsie was out for the day; but she had left provisions, with minute instructions to Jerome, which he had totally forgotten. It was left to Golda to find eggs and bread-and-butter and to prepare some kind of a meal. Jerome sat listlessly sharpening pencils; and neither mentioned the fresco for which she had come from Italy.

At dusk, there came a knock at the door, and a note was handed in. Jerome, without turning, motioned to Golda to open it. She glanced at the first words; and then handed it to him. He read; and laughed long and loud.

A slip of paper had fallen to the floor.

"She sends me a cheque," he cried; "says the picture was beautifully painted; that it was a great mistake on her part, deeply regretted, to treat a work of art as a personal thing — that she felt all along she should only have seen it at an exhibition. That she would appreciate 'as a kindness' my never referring to it in future. — Oh, Golda, Golda!" He buried his head in his arms.

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Golda's lips were compressed. She went over and laid a hand on his shoulder. "Look up, boy! You, with all your book-lore and painter-lore, will never understand women. Don't you see, this is not a question of art to her, but of motherhood? Somewhere, somehow, she has terribly failed — or that look would never have been there for you to see in the eyes of her child. It was not your brutality that offended her — though you were a Vandal, too! — but the terrible tenderness of that interpretation of a child's life, which you had no business to make."

"I painted what I saw!" growled Jerome. "For that matter, the governess herself looked half-starved, as do most of these haggard New Englanders. . . ."

"Not unless you catch them unawares! And that's what you did: a hard thing to forgive. — Oh, I can understand so well! Just because I am a stranger. When *we* have emotion, we feel better, refreshed; the storm is over, the sun comes out. But when these people show any feeling, it is their heart's blood you have drawn: they will never forgive you. — And on top of

that, to tear up the picture — the act of a mad boy!”

Jerome flung up his head. “I destroyed it because it hurt her — to save her pain!”

“Well, how do you suppose she feels? It’s all very well to send her back the cheque, — and I know you don’t care that it’s all you’ve got, just now, — but how are you going to reconcile that with the ‘kindness of never referring to the incident again’?”

“What a confounded muddle, — what a hopeless muddle! — I can only send it back with regret and silence, since I failed to carry out my contract. — And we might have been so happy! I could have painted another side of the child, — kept this as a study —” Then, in a reactionary burst of rage: “But it was a true piece of painting — it was good stuff!”

“Of course, it was! — ‘Damn good,’ as you say. But you have n’t grown up yet. . . .”

“Basta! — Go and get ready, and I’ll start the cartoon of the ‘Spring’ to-night.”

“Adeste fideles!” Golda was clearly elated. “Now, that sounds more like friend Hieronymus. Will you have enough light?”

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"Yes; for charcoal. — Light me those church-candles — and *all* the brass lamps. We'll make the place glow like San Pietro at vespers! I've got all my stuff ready. . . ."

He collected his materials, nodded contentedly as Golda, who had disappeared to undress, stepped on the model-throne, and, with a fury of hunger, stared and scribbled and stared again, for hours, till the sheet was covered, and the lamp-flames staggered and went out.

Then happy, sated, he flung himself down on the bear-skin, and lit a cigarette. When Golda came in again, coated and veiled, she was smiling secretly.

"Feel better?"

"Rather! And what's more, I'll put that child in, too: but *happy*, running towards the Spring with her hands full of flowers. I'll make a glad thing of her!"

"Yes, do; I wondered whether you'd think of her — all the days and weeks she posed for you! . . ."

"That work will help. I'll fill her hands with blossoms. Everybody's got 'em; it's a sort of *fête des fleurs*, a regular bacchanalian orgy of

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flowers — all kinds of them, Golda, bursting out at once!”

“But they don’t, you know —”

“Never mind,” said Jerome crossly. “I’ll *make* ’em! And faster than they ever came yet — all over the New England rocks. Come early, Golda, *early* to-morrow!”

He went to his piano, muttering that the sixth-century Chinese were the only people who understood things, and that he, Jerome, would forever remain uncomprehended.

Golda, forgotten, slipped away as the song ended: —

“High o’er the hill the moon-barque steers,
The lantern lights depart.

Dead springs are stirring in my heart;
And there are tears.

But that which makes my grief more deep
Is that you know not when I weep.”

VII

Here you would be in port, secure from all agitation . . . All the repose of the grave, and yet a happy life.

DOSTOIEVSKY

THE Back Bay having discovered Jerome, by way of the earl, invitations began to come in; and these signs of amity were graciously accepted by the young painter, half-starved for youth and gaiety, and the sight of one lovely face.

At first the quantity of chinless spinsters appalled him, the church atmosphere of menless musicals, the visits to the Art Morgue, to view a hapless mutilated torso imported from Greece. Then he began to discover, with the zest of a lover of life, certain beautiful types of white-haired women and thoughtful men; and he was no longer bored. They liked him, I think, because he liked them so heartily. They interested themselves genuinely in his mad dreams, shaking their heads over the vision of the young artist beating his wings against their bars.

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But it was after he had nearly died from a chill caught in his cold studio that they showed him the kindness of which they were capable. Hothouse flowers and French novels poured in, with shy words from people who had appeared to him most frozen. When he confessed to a love of nature, they took him by motor to beautiful suburbs surrounded by cemeteries, where the loveliest spots in New England are reserved for dead soldiers and firemen.

Then, shyly, after watching it carefully for two years, they had bought some of his work, small pictures, where fauns danced in sylvan glades. There was a certain fearful joy, not to say defiance, in displaying these reckless canvases to their most intimate friends, who had taken opposite sides in the immortal contest over the "Bacchante." Indeed, it was hard to discover in the modern Bostonian any outward sign of the Puritanical spirit. If it existed, it was concealed like a plague-spot, or glossed over with French art. Their foreign culture consisted in a trip to Paris with a Back Bay band of friends; and in taking the "Illustration" for the benefit of their French maids.

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They read only the "latest things." They enjoyed the newest plays, like asparagus, out of season; by rushing off to New York for the premières, and to see styles in hats. These last, Mrs. Osborne confided to Jerome once, she had to put under her bed for a month, before daring to wear them.

Jerome, in quest of a Bostonian, was dining one night at the Somerset Club with T. Worcester Worcester, the famous leader of cotillions, and his friends, of whom the earl was one, when he gave voice to these reflections.

"Yes, we are dowdy," T. W. W. admitted, with his superior English accent; but Jerome resented this in his hearty new patriotism, which was becoming strenuously local.

"If the women in the shopping districts are dowdy," he said, "compared to New York (which I hate), the women in the limousines are exquisite. And so are many who go on foot, and live on high ideals — and high hills. But none of you have time to play, and all of you are 'rushed.' You are afraid of not being as noisy as New York. I heard a child of six tell her teacher she had 'not time' to finish her page of

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writing. — Think of the grounding those little tots get in France! *You* have only time for a smattering of everything — whatever happens to be *the* thing! And so I'm the only one in this busy place with leisure to flâneur, — a lost art!"

"You may corrupt us yet," laughed his host; "I heard it said the other day, it was a sign of the decadence of Boston, that they are buying your stuff!"

"And I heard," broke in the earl solemnly, "that you were a dangerous man. — Think of that, Leigh! You, whom we called the Hermit and Sir Galahad in Paris, — what are you here? An adventurer! You are never serious, my poor friend."

"I never could learn to be. I'm either sad or gay, are n't you?" Then, joyously: "Of course I'm an adventurer! — who would n't be, who could? What quest was ever like this coming to New England? Let them be sure of it: I am the one who adventures!"

Ian laughingly seized his glass: "To the Candid Adventurer!" he cried.

But Jerome was now as solemn as the list-

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ening circle. "They had better be careful, Ian! If they don't look out, they'll have all their doors and windows wide open, and the winds of heaven blowing through. Their backyards will blossom into gardens; and the poor little Italian immigrants will find orange-trees and vines around the homesick Greek torsi in cold museum galleries. The people of New England — if they don't take care — will suspect that art was made for the joy of life, to be a part of *their* life, expressing their emotions and dreams, their divine possibilities. They'll forget the trousered bronzes feeling for rain, the horses stuck up on band-boxes in their public squares, and turn to life in art. Take care, take care! There's music on the Embankment by the jolly boat-house where it's green and wide; there'll be little tables on the asphalt, boats on the river, moored to the owner's painted stakes; glad people walking up and down listening to the violins — Italians, Russians, tramps and artists and pretty girls, as in the wise old world —"

The men laughed, while Jerome solemnly concluded: "Dangerous fellows like myself,

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born of hard-fighting, hard-drinking Cavaliers, not Puritans, will call on your world to dance. And, little by little, you'll begin. — Not hideous Apache-dances, adopted out of reaction; but lovely Greek movements, stately pavaues, where the grace of life has room to flow!"

He rose gaily, glass in hand: "Here's to Her, the new New England! of the sweet, disdainful head, the queenly heart, the clear brain, and quick light footstep . . . Can't you see her, sinking in a curtsy, barely touching with flower-like hand the tip of her partner's fingers?"

A little flush rose on his host's cheek, and he leaned forward and touched Jerome's glass with his own.

When the group broke up, one of the men took Jerome's arm and walked part of the way home with him through the frosty streets.

"You know my cousin, Mrs. Osborne? She married my brother. What you were saying reminded me of her, somehow. When she first came out, I tried to know her better; but, though we lived near each other and constantly met, I have never made out what she thinks, what she feels. At Newport, she was so gay,

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played tennis, auction; rode, danced, — I had almost said flirted, if so delicate a game as she played could be called by that name. But in Boston, she is all shut up again. No one knows if she is happy, or if she regrets. . . . Have you ever known her to commit herself to anything?"

Jerome paused to relight his cigar. Throwing away the match, "I hate gush anyway, you know."

The other laughed. "Then how happy you must be here! I am Bostonian to the backbone, surrounded on all sides by family; but sometimes, like the Irishman, I feel as if I had been born 'lonely as the moon of dawn.' When I can't stand it any longer, I take the Limited to New York, just to walk up and down Fifth Avenue and feel wicked unobserved!"

Jerome stared with sympathetic humour at the nervous young man. "You are the fifth," he remarked slowly, "who has secretly confessed to me that he is different from all the rest here, and longing to be free. . . . Where *are* the real Bostonians?"

VIII

Not Heaven itself upon the past has power,
But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour.

DRYDEN

JEROME felt like rushing off, himself, when the next morning rose on a world of snow. Icicles hung on the eaves, like a river-god's beard; the trees were loaded with fairy blossoms, incredibly beautiful.

Mrs. Osborne, passing by the studio in her long white furs, caught sight of a line of red, red roses breasting a redoubt of snow; and paused to scrutinize the phenomenon.

Jerome, in Russian boots and blouse, relics of his year on the steppes, was setting out the flowers with anxious care.

"Cruel!" she called over to him. "They'll die in the snow."

"They'll melt it!" retorted Jerome. "Quelle belle mort!"

Muriel gazed wide-eyed at her beloved storyteller, expecting a miracle.

But Mrs. Osborne made a moue. "Do you expect to rout the winter with roses?"

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"It's to encourage the spring, the darling! You grudge every leaf that opens!" Jen lifted himself up and brought over a large stemmed jacqueminot. "Are n't they wonderful? Things looked so discouraging, this morning, that I took all the silver in the tobacco-jar, and bought these beauties. They would melt the hardest ice. . . ." He placed the flower very gently and deftly in the fur at her throat. "Hyria hyrsia, Muriel! You'll see, we'll win out yet!"

Mrs. Osborne drew imperceptibly away. "I never wear any but white flowers —" But she lifted the rose a moment to her cheek before giving it to the little girl. "I trust your troop may win, Captain Leigh!"

"Thanks for the wish, marquise. — If both of us wish that, the victory is near!"

He stood gazing after her, pipe in hand, the snow up to the tops of his boots. The world, all white, seemed her kingdom: he, alone, an interloper.

"How sweet her lips are!" he thought. "Her eyes, so sad; till there comes a dawn of laughter that draws the very heart out of your body!"

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But there has never yet appeared in her the perfect sunrise of joy. Will it ever, I wonder? — And if *I* were created and put into this lonely world to make it come? — About as much chance of that, as of my roses melting the snow. And yet, the spring is bound to come, the icicles to melt! Have I come too soon, I wonder? Or else, perhaps, too late!”

He sanely left these questions to Fate to answer, and went back to his work. The outburst of the torn picture had not crossed his memory when he saw Mrs. Osborne in the snow. The storm, and the evening labour, left no trace of rancour in his healthy young mind. He could not realize that she might not be able to forget as easily.

He sought to meet her at balls and dinners, in every place he could. It was no easy matter. She picked her dances carefully; arrived very late; and was always surrounded. His eyes eagerly scanned the entering faces at the Copley-Plaza, on the night when T. Worcester Worcester used all the resources at his command to produce a unique and ineffaceable impression. The scene was really magical, —

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an Italian garden; and Jerome's eyes longed to see the one and only Queen of Cyprus running through it, as her prototype did at Asolo. He himself, with his square shoulders, English clothes, yellow hair, and mocking eyes, was sufficiently distinctive anywhere; and when Mrs. Osborne saw him across her partner's shoulder, her eyebrows went up.

"I don't approve." He caught the words as the music ceased, leaving her near him.

"What?" he laughed. "My tie? My hair?"

"Your being here at all — burning the candle at both ends."

"You would not have me a book-worm, — paint-brush?"

"You have no business to *look* as you do, — and paint as you do! You *can't* work all day and dance all night. And it's four o'clock now."

"I was waiting for our waltz. — Voulez-vous bostonner, marquise?"

She did not answer at once, and Jerome's deep-set, laughing eyes challenged her, — the lines in his cheeks, the strong, white teeth, that seemed only made for laughter.

A vacant-looking youth was bowing before

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her. Jerome turned carelessly away with the words: "I'd rather have the last dance with you. À tantôt!" and he moved off towards one of the prettiest of the young girls there whom he took out with an indifference which clearly piqued her.

If Mrs. Osborne noticed this, she gave no sign. Other young men came up to claim her, and Jerome was nowhere in sight. Finally, as she stooped to gather up her scarf and favours before leaving, she met his eyes across the dusty floor.

Jerome strolled up. "Our waltz?"

"But I am just leaving. It is far too late."

His eyes lit up; and before she realized it, they were gliding off in perfect accord towards an open doorway. There, among green terraces and orange-trees, the freshness of an Italian night received them. The strains of the sad old waltz she had danced to as a girl in Paris followed them into the greenness.

Jerome said no word to break the charm. There were no Boston faces watching them. She let herself dance around the dancing fountain, all the grace of her body flowing into the

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lovely movement, the haunting sadness of violins. He held her lightly, almost fiercely, head averted; the force that guided him with hers, like a monoplane bearing her through the clouds. For a divine instant, there seemed no reason to cease moving, any more than the stars did in their course; the ether bore them up; magnetic currents swayed them with equilibrium in their orbit. Jerome's glance fell on hers and lightened with exhilaration, till she too had to laugh with him, from sheer joy in the fray.

It was her young laughter that was his answer, his triumph of a lifetime. He was bearing her off as surely as ever his knightly precursor had done. For one moment she knew, perhaps the wonder of yielding to a strength as great as her own; and she did not resist, but closed her eyes and let the music bear her on. . . .

When the Valse Aurore died away, they were facing a green bosquet that led to Nowhere; and, a little breathlessly, she turned and moved towards the door. Neither of them had spoken. The perfect moment was not marred.

He saw the flashing silver gown vanish,

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among the last of the dancers, in the empty darkness of her limousine; and feeling that the Universe alone was big enough to contain him and his love, fared forth on foot into the night.

The dawn was near to breaking when he reached the river. The brown ice-coating was parting in starlike fissures while a warm wind rippled the waters struggling to be free.

"Oh, New England — melting, melting!" sang Jerome to the ice and the spring wind. He bared his head, and with wistfulness and a kind of tremulous joy, watched the slow-coming dawn.

IX

Stil ist für mich sozusagen Jugend, Grösse, Kraft, Reli
. . . körperlich und Seelisch un be rührbar.

SUDERMA

AFTER this, he did not need to see her: was too happy. She filled him up to his finger-tips. He painted her all day long. Her movements sang in his "Spring"—her ro gestures, her lightly falling feet, her tenc mocking smile.

Hour after hour Golda held the pose wh the man, absorbed, drank at his fount of i spiration; instinctively following the lines nature before him, but colouring it all with th exaltation of his love.

The little Polish model became a piece o furniture to him. He looked at her dazed if sh spoke. One colder morning than usual, th brazier having gone out, he absent-mindedly put on his coat, never noticing her shivers. He was overwhelmed with remorse about this afterwards; but it was typical.

By this time half the fresco was done and

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Jerome began to make study after study of the little Muriel running in the garden (for she never posed again in the studio). He transferred the quintessence of these to his wall, working early through the long mornings, when Mrs. Osborne was out. Several times, she asked him to stay to luncheon afterwards; but he rarely accepted, feeling stiff and dazed when he climbed down from his scaffolding, and taciturn. He had a nervous dread of being with people, except when his high spirits bore him lightly through their midst. He shut himself up during these not less frequent periods of silence. Believing himself a jester by nature he avoided people whenever he could not play with them. With Mrs. Osborne, he felt himself always on the other side of a net, alert to catch her balls, to send them back lightly or smashingly, tip-toe and ready. He had all the love-games; she the advantage: but when they shook hands over the net, he felt it had been worth while. She had a perfect sporting spirit, which he knew would never fail.

When the warm May days began, instead of a siesta on his bear-rug, he was tempted by the

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divine freshness of the sunshine into the orchard behind the studio, where he lay, all a summer afternoon, under a canopy of apple-blossoms.

It was near the boundary-line of Her garden; and so it was not surprising that the little Muriel should find him there, and, acting according to the spirit of fairy-stories, should creep up to crown him with a chaplet of wild-grape leaves. Then she ran for her mother; and without explanation, brought her suddenly around a tree-bole upon him.

Jerome lay prone, belted in his blouse, hands clenched in the soft grass, all flushed with happy sleep. Before she could move, his brown eyes opened on her, as naturally as a young animal's; and for a second they looked into hers, as the first man might have looked at the first woman: all wonder. How still she stood! Jerome remembered a squirrel he had once surprised, who stood transfixed on the bough as though paralyzed, one tiny hand clutching at its heart. He did not move now, and she shrank back into the trees; but it was not until Muriel called to him, that Jerome sprang up.

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Then, indeed, he swung the little girl to his shoulder, and began capering like a faun through the orchard, in wild swoops and leaps of bounding joy, tossing her into the foam of blossoms. Against the depths of blue the flowers seemed almost breathlessly luminous, as with a happiness streaked with blood, like the red-and-white blossoms themselves. Muriel called out to her mother to catch them; and shrieked with joy when she pelted them as they fled down the grassy avenues. The excitement was not diminished by Jerome's shouting the chorus of the old Goliard song in time to his leaps:—

“Redder than rose art thou,
Whiter than lily thou!
Hyria hyrsia nazaza
Trillirivos.”

Finally they sank breathlessly down in the young grass, and laughed at each other. And when the governess came and bore away the little Muriel, they were still so buried in spring and flowers, they hardly noticed her departure.

They seemed to be on the top of the world far from everything. Fields slanted away be-

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yond them to the valley; the shadows of Lovers' Lane enclosed them to the east. Even her white house could not be seen from the orchard; and when Mrs. Osborne raised her hand in dismay to her loosened hair, she only laughed when it fell in a dusky shower, raining to the ground. She shook it free and blushed, and, clasping her hands at her knees, said she would pretend that she was sitting by the sea, and a wave had broken over her.

Jerome half knelt, deep in grass, a little way off, staring up into the branches, his hands clasped with the joy of it hard behind his head, singing to himself, and making pictures like mad in his brain. She could no more have felt embarrassed with him than with a big Newfoundland dog; he looked so trustfully happy when she spoke, and so absorbed in Nature when she did not. As she wound the dark coils into place again, she felt an inexplicable desire to tease him.

"To think of you confined in the garb of civilization again!"

Jerome cocked an eyebrow: "Meaning —?"

"At Copley-Plaza dances!"

"I felt very much at home there, in my element, dancing! — By the way, did *we* ever dance together?" He bent and looked under her lashes.

She puckered her brow. "It's *so* hard to remember, is n't it? I have a dim idea I saw you at one of them. What a waste of time! You ought to live in the bole of a tree. — Are there any male dryads?"

"I've only known the other kind. Now, *you* came out of one of those beautiful swaying trees around your house that scent the air with clusters of white sweet-peas —"

"Hm! locust? acacia?"

"You have it. I've loved trees since boyhood. They are the best friends! Do you remember when Augustine, in his hour of agony left his friend weeping, and cast himself down at the foot of the fig tree in his garden? The dark, broad leaves could heal him when a human hand could only hurt. — And the thrill of great cypresses! —"

Mrs. Osborne hesitated. Then — "I *must* go back to my purple room you despise so!"

"Ah, that room of yours! I can see it, — all a

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deep soulful mauve, very ascetic, very æsthetic; and the blue roses you affect; and your gowns all grey and black; and the dead-white flowers you wear! Ah, look across your garden, — all the azalea trees on fire!”

She smiled a moment secretly, and opened the revers of her coat. On the foam of lace that hid the sweet curved bosom lay a ruby deep-flashing in its circlet of gems; so large and glowing that it seemed to throb there like a heart.

“That, there!” cried Jerome, marvelling.

She looked down at it smiling. “My jeweller tells me that it should be rounded, to be in fashion, and kindly offered to cut it down for me. But I thought I could wait till Paris, for that. And you — don’t mind old-fashioned things.”

“I glory in them. But what,” he scoffed, “have rubies to do with Quicksilver? For that is what you are.”

He leaned back and ruminated on the simile, filled by an exultation (not to be understood by the sane) by the fact of anything blood-red resting near her heart.

"Quicksilver, indeed, is what you appear to be made of; impossible to catch, to pick up or to form; and yet, so gently willing to take any shape, so utterly and definitely intangible!"

"Well, but useful? — marking the temperature?"

"Rarely above thirty-two degrees! But if one could hold it a moment in one's two hands! . . . How it runs away! Radiant Quicksilver, wild as a bird, gentle as water, silvery as a star!"

But she was ready for him: "Quicksilver, Mercury: one of the Inferior Planets."

"Mercury — seven times more dazzling than the sun!" chanted Jerome exultantly; "whom the Greeks named $\Sigma\tau\lambda\beta\omega\nu$ for its brilliancy; of whom Copernicus, dying, lamented that he had never caught a gleam. . . ."

"Pretty, pretty. But where there is no atmosphere and so little attraction that it has no satellites!"

"There is a rumour," Jerome broke in pensively, "that there are volcanoes, not yet discovered, on Mercury."

"A rumour quite unconfirmed," retorted Mrs. Osborne promptly; and they both laughed.

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“As the transit of Mercury occurs in May, I shall see it for myself early to-morrow. — O my morning-star!

““He changeth not who to a star is fixed!””

— And as he murmured Leonardo’s words he seemed to drift off into a land of romance in which the present had no part.

She meant to go then, but could not resist a parting shaft: “Do you only *really* wake up early in the morning?”

“Rarely even then. — Hydragrym,” he muttered, “occurring in Nature as Cinnabar. — You come from beautiful far places — Almeden in Spain, Idria in Illyria; Mexico, Peru, Japan. But those who deal with mercury must suffer much; for its action is not limited to the surface, but extends into the deeper cells —”

“What *are* you muttering?” She leaned towards him, her eyes deliciously closed in mischief.

“Oh, you must not go now! I have such a lot of things to tell you —”

“About mineralogy? It’s getting late —”

“About human nature.”

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She became judicial. "Oh, *I* know: you want to talk about that wife of yours!"

"I do," with firmness and a dancing eye: "Will you marry me, marquise?"

"I remember you once asked me for my advice, I think?"

"I did. But I don't need any, now, thanks. I have settled all that."

"Oh, you have? I think you are sadly in need of advice, young man."

"Sadly in need, as you say!" Jerome sighed prodigiously. "And I may call on you for it, too, some day. But all that will be much easier to settle" — his glance wandered off to the clouds again — "after we are married."

"The advice might come too late, then."

"Oh, so much comes too late! — Will you marry me now, marquise?"

"Why, of *course*. To-day, or to-morrow?"

She was playing the game superbly. Jerome, that lover of games, acknowledged it with sparkling eyes. But his voice deepened: —

"To-morrow — the sky might fall! See — it is falling already!"

She threw back her head and looked up at

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the twilight branches, from which white blossoms came drifting down on her dark head, her knees, her open hands.

"Falling, falling!" he echoed in an ecstasy. "Marquise, will you marry me to-day?"

She caught up her scarf and gloves; mockingly dropped him a curtsey, "Merci, mon prince!" and vanished around the side of the hedge.

Jerome did not move. "At least," he thought, "I did not spoil her play: I made it. A pretty play. As for me, I am her playfellow, but not her plaything. Why spoil the game?" He chewed a blade of grass thoughtfully.

The old gardener came up. He had grown old on the place, and to him Jerome was still a child.

"Shall I brush you off, Master Jerome, sir?"

"Snowed under, McCarthy. I don't mind."

"'T is a pity as Mrs. Osborne won't see the garden after June, sir. — There, you look much tidier —"

"Why not after June?"

"Why? 'Cause she's sailing for the other side, sir."

Jerome stared at him as if the old man had struck him a blow. Mrs. Osborne in Paris, Mrs. Osborne in Italy — And he, Jerome, the faun, the dancer, in New England! Oh, the irony of it! — Why, why could he not be with her over there, where she would forget? . . . Why could he not show her the exquisite places he had loved, the pictures and dim cathedrals he had sung aves to since childhood!

Something desperate must be done. But there, precisely, stood the stone wall; none the less potent for being invisible. Hieronymus of the High Hand could not place her on his charger and gallop away towards the rising sun. Modern woman requires too many delicate accessories. He remembered her first wearing of a new gown hot from Paquin's. Full as it was, where nature made an unbroken flowing line of the thighs, it was tied in, below the knees; and her first steps were like those of a child, hand outstretched, feet stumbling. The neat little head, so faultlessly waved, required a trained hand; and all her surroundings must be white, enamelled, fresh as herself.

And he wanted to give her everything. She

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must not come to him with another man's money. He was fancifully, but none the less immovably, obstinate on this point.

He made up his mind that he would not speak again until he had had some stroke of luck.

This stroke, he felt simply, rested with his paint-brush; and, having settled the matter in his own mind, he worked away for weeks, quite happily, without trying to see her. The fresco grew; the big empty music-room was left to him entirely. Each morning, the "Spring" grew lovelier, nearer fulfilment, and she more remote and dear. Though he would not see her, he felt a pang each time the sound of her car at the door told him she was going out for the day.

And she was always going. In those June days, the quiet, elm-shadowed lanes were alive with undergraduates and their families. Fresh voices echoed through the stately old house, even to the recesses of the music-room where Jerome seemed glued to his scaffolding. Letters from Paris even had no more power to move him.

Finally, late one afternoon, he heard the door

open behind him, and a faint rustle of silken folds that paused at the threshold.

"I am not coming in," came the mocking, well-remembered tones, "unless you ask me to."

Jerome sat still, held his breath, as though a bird had entered and would spread its wings if he so much as whispered.

Mrs. Osborne had paused for an invitation; and getting none, was turning with the suspicion of a pirouette, when Jerome glanced over his shoulder.

There stood an exquisite grey figure on the polished floor over which the western light made beautiful play.

"Pooh!" said Jerome, and turning back to his fresco reflectively: "I've no objection to your coming in."

"Since you are so cordial—" Her laugh made Jerome's heart leap. He had waited for months and years, for just this moment. His work was uncovered, all but completed; and as he stepped carefully down and took the brush from his mouth, he looked at it and not at her.

She came forward with hesitation, a line between her brows. Perhaps she remembered

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the torn picture. It was, at all events, a little nervously, a little formally, that she said, after a long pause:—

“I congratulate you, Mr. Leigh.”

He bowed, his hand on his heart; then tossed back his head and laughed down at her.

“Wait, wait, till it’s finished—this summer!”

“But I’m sailing for France next week.”

Jerome blessed the old gardener who had prepared him for the first shock of this announcement. He could answer gaily:—

“You will like to look at it, in the winter days?”

His tone was wistful, for the long months of labour had been so full of her, so full of pain and pleasure in the work itself.

She sat on a step halfway up the ladder, and looked long at the happy painted sky. Jerome folded his arms and stared up at it too.

“Cloud-castles,” he remarked, “in which I mostly lived.”

“Oh—the happy little girl!” She had caught sight of the running Muriel in the lunette, and made a movement towards her.

“Do you like it?” asked Jerome eagerly,

imprudently. "If I could only make you give one cry of joy!"

"You could n't!"

"Could n't I?"

"I would bite it off, before it came!"

"Civitta!" cried Jerome, as in "Bohême," "Strega!"

She laughed. "You'll never get a word out of me, you know!"

"There's nothing *in* you," he retorted.

"How clever of you to find out — after only four months!" Jerome took a stride towards her; but she backed uneasily. "Keep away! I can't fence with you."

"Why do you try, marquise?" He folded his Russian blouse about him, and sank on the lowest step of the ladder, as though remembering something.

"By the way, I had a letter from Paris this morning. My 'Riders' has been bought by the Luxembourg —"

"I *am* pleased. How very nice for you!"

"Thanks. I've better stuff in here," he tapped his mane. "Marquise, if you'll marry me now, we'll have such a wonderful time!"

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"I am sure of it!" She moved as if to go.

Jerome looked up at her with such pleading eyes that she sat down again, almost distressed.

"Just consider it," he went on, clasping his knee, "in an impersonal light. — In the beginning of the world —"

"Ah, avocat, passons au déluge. — I apologize for the chestnut."

"Fairly caught," sighed Jerome. "We'll begin with the deluge, then. — When that blessed pipe burst which brought you to me on a certain rainy afternoon — I made up my mind to marry you."

"That's very interesting; but what has it to do with me?"

"Not much, of course; for it is generally my determination which wins. — Where would I be now if I had not, all my life, done things that people told me were impossible? — But still, of course, you have a certain interest in the matter, even if merely negative."

"Decidedly negative, I should say," she murmured.

"Even if decidedly negative. (A negative force is generally, however, far less effective

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than a positive one.) But there are other arguments —”

“What arguments, however convincing, ever won a woman?”

“Oh, marquise!” he looked up at her radiantly, pleadingly. “I have no argument but Love. Life is so short, and the cup of life is held to our lips so brief a time! You know that I could give you what no one else in this blessed place could give: the joy of youth that you have never known — your youth which is still asleep, — music, sunshine, the wine of love —”

“But all this is not for me.” She repeated it tremulously: “Not for me.”

Jerome sank on his knee and lifted a soft fold to his lips. “It is for you, Mary, Mary, if you will only stretch out your hand to take it! This little hand — so white, so small to take the weight of my unwieldy gifts!” She had yielded it to him, but held down firmly at her side, so that he should clasp it like a comrade, not a lover.

• He rose, holding it in both his own, his eyes turned away, his odd habit of abstract thought creeping over him again. “There is so much to

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be done; and we have everything to give you and I. Think of it! — all we could give the joy of the world when we are working together! The things I have are only in my hands but my future is in them. And you could give to my hand and my brain. Ah, some day I shall be glad that you were loved by ‘the scholar and the goliardeis’ — wandering scholar and wanderer, what you will: but standing on his own feet, winning with his own hands —”

Her voice was low. “I am proud now that all this is futile, is absurd!” She threw her head as though casting off a spell. “I will never marry again.”

In the twilight, he saw her eyes close and her wonderful white face uplifted, as one who had drunk to the dregs a bitter cup.

The next moment, she was smiling down at him: “That’s over! We will never speak of this again.”

Her mood was compelling. Jerome went to the window, calling back whimsically over his shoulder: “There clangs a prison-door. Tell me your real reason, Mary?”

She looked around her as though to sun

the room to her help. "But it's absurd, you know! You are only a boy."

"I am twenty-eight."

"I am five years older."

"Is that a reason" — his voice rang scornfully but low across the twilight — "for throwing away our happiness?"

"*Our* happiness?" she mocked.

"Yes, ours! You know, you know, that no one in this place divines you as I do! — All the secret rebellions, the bitternesses, the longings at spring dawns to escape where thought is free and the happy gods are at play. . . . All the straining at invisible shackles, that tie you down to relatives and duties as mercilessly as ever Gulliver was tied by the hair of his head. It's to you, with the New England conscience, that I speak! Can't you feel" — he drew nearer, his voice vibrating and low — "what it would be, Mary, Mary, to carry your sweet child off with us to lands of the sun; to hear her laugh as she never laughs here, — to have *my* joy, my work, my two strong arms to protect you, — to have something to fight for, something to live for, at last, — something to die for?"

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“Dreamer!” She seemed striving to keep her tone light; and Jerome, to help her, smiled up at her, until he caught in her whisper the renouncement: “‘Behüt’ Dich Gott, es wär zu schön gewesen, —’”

There was a long silence. The man, spent, waited in the dusk, his heart pounding to suffocation, feeling in the very absence of denial, a weight that even his buoyant strength was powerless to lift. All the anguish of loss swept over him as he felt her rise; and he caught at the grey folds desperately.

“I must go now!” She stooped, as she felt his protesting words, and bent back his head to look at him — a gesture so tender!

“Mary, Mary, my only lady and my love — will you wreck both our lives?”

“Only mine, if necessary.” She smiled a little dimly. “And for you — you will soon get over it!”

X

Winter is come : and deep, my friend
Is its ice on my tears and blood.
You never will make me weep, my friend,
Ah, God, if you only could!

MALLOCK

With everything going against him, Jerome worked during those last days with the inexplicable exaltation of a conqueror watching triumphant cohorts surround the enemy. She was gone: but he could feel her a thousand times nearer to him in Paris than in Boston. Italy would teach her to know him. When she had lain half a night listening to the nightingales, then . . . His own high spirits soared with the June morning.

He had begged to write.

"Once," she had smiled. "But you will get no answer. And I destroy all my letters."

"Only *one* love-letter?—when the whole place is calling out your name!"

"And not a love-letter. Not *that* word in it—"

"Not? even in Italian? How could I manage

to exclude it utterly? I am, you see, painfully conscientious: it is my only fault. And I might want to send — well, love, love, love — to little Muriel, — or, I might inadvertently love your acacia-trees that sway so whitely against these skies of June, or the cry of the whip-poor-will in the long white nights, when the stars are tangled up in the dusk of the cedar-boughs. . . .”

She laughed helplessly. “I amend then: only where I am concerned.”

“Of course!” cheerfully. “*That’s* easy. — But to dispose of the question once and for all: I will never give you up, you know!”

Her eyes met his without flinching, in a kind of high sadness, and Jerome bared his head and neither moved nor spoke, while her words came slowly, as though they cost her blood:

“I will be your friend, Jerome.”

What could he do but bless her, for her candour, her divine condescension? His gratitude found refuge in the work, which proceeded at white pressure during the whole of that summer. Besides the fresco, he painted the series of water-colours of the Charles River, now at the

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Metropolitan Museum, with a touch so vibrating and glad, an art so sure, that they have remained a model of their kind. All the poetry of dusk and dawn by the riverside has found its utterance there, in a manner which marked a new epoch in American painting.

There was so much to do that he did not even write. He and Golda read the Russian and Italian novelists aloud in the summer evenings. Golda generally read, her pretty Polish accent colouring the words; while Jerome stared at his fresco, pipe in mouth. He went nowhere and was divinely happy.

But on Golda the summer was telling heavily. Her slight form drooped and her mouth was often twisted in a bitter smile. She seemed indifferent to everything, spoke flippantly, and secretly pined for the heat of the Roman lanes.

Jerome saw nothing, in his contented masculine way, until one Saturday, late in August, when they were strolling through the dusty sunset streets towards Roxbury.

Golda stopped at a little candle-shop under the spires of the Mission church, and bought a tall taper.

"Do you mind if we go in for vespers?"

"Let 's," said Jerome promptly. "It'll be like old Roman days, when we stopped at the Araceli and dreamed among the frescoes dimmed by incense. What days those were, Golda! We were young. . . . Do you remember the Campagna, and Savelli on his tall bay, when you both were posing for the 'Riders'?"

"Do I remember!" she echoed sadly.

"What a jolly chap Savelli was — though he *was* poor and a prince! Yet with twenty lire in one's pocket one feels like a millionaire over there! I'd like to be back amongst them all — the blessed Old Guard!"

They stepped into the marble atrium that is more like a Roman church than any place in Boston; passed the men kneeling before the crucifix, and crossed the dim aisle.

Golda went to a side chapel and, placing her candle before the altar, lighted it, and knelt before it, while Jerome watched her, oddly stirred by the incense, by memories of a youth spent among those symbols.

As they went out, he asked in a low voice: "Was it some wish, Golda?"

She did not answer.

"A candle for you, to burn steadily for hours?"

"Not for me."

He flushed a little. "For me, then?"

"Not for you."

Jerome looked at her questioningly.

"It was for It," she muttered.

"It?"

"What is made out of me and you: the Work—"

Jerome was more moved than he would own, and strode on in silence. He began to notice her for the first time; to be a little puzzled by her. Until now, she had simply seemed a link with his past, though a very vital part of his work. Had she not brought him luck in the 'Riders,' and inspiration in his fresco of 'Spring'? He was profoundly grateful to her. He began to wonder a little what her past had been. There could be divined some tragedy in the delicate personality veiled by a boyish offhand manner, but he had never sought to discover it. Even now, the artist was first and foremost in him; and the next morning, when she seemed to flag

in her pose, he waved his brush at her as eagerly as ever. Nevertheless, it dawned upon him that he might try to dispel the monotony of the work for her.

"Blood-curdling incidents," he remarked, peering up at the line of her shoulder, "are not apt to occur in Cambridge. The most tragic thing in this place is, that no tragedy ever occurs. It just goes on and on. And the faces! High-bred, high-keyed, longing to rebel; reckless in words, deadly conservative in action; never forgetting themselves, taking even their emotions vicariously —"

"And their pleasures!" broke in Golda. "When a man discovers you are interesting to talk to, he orders two seats at a theatre and hires people to talk for both."

"Or plays cards. Those bits of pasteboard stand for the emotions they need in order to feel alive — fear, hope, the passion of gain, despair, and exultation. Why play cards when there are people of flesh-and-blood to play with?"

"Are there?"

"Well, I'm one. The one game to play here is squash — with yourself. Boston is the brick

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wall; you drive the ball; it bounds back inevitably; you get quite a lot of exercise that way. If you throw your heart or your brains instead, it's your own fault. It does not affect the wall, of course."

"Why do you stay, Jerome?"

"Why? Because I'm in love with it — New England, you know. It's so clean; it's so high; it's so unattainable! You're in no danger of satiety, here —"

"Oh, no, no!"

"The river is so wide, the Embankment gives such a sweep to the sunset. The campanile in Copley Square looks then as ethereal as San Giorgio, floating in golden mists. From the high roofs on Commonwealth Avenue, the city is as beautiful as a ship of dreams drifting towards the sea. The gold dome is its capstan, its stern, the noble Avenue. The little red streets at dusk glow with orange lights — there are *homes* here! In this land of hotels and barrack apartments, people live in houses, full of a high dignity, unostentatious. If they'd only give themselves time to play, they would be the most perfect people!"

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"You *are* in love!" she mocked. "Anything could be transfigured by a sunset — and Jerome Leigh. But what of those crowded back streets? What of the furniture in the houses? What of 'Boston culture'?"

"Oh, well, — I don't care a fig for all that, — or for Colonial Times, either, or the Concord Sages — So forget 'em! What I'm after is the blessed city of to-day, — of to-morrow, — that's alive and building. By and by, we'll get soft lights in the Opera-House, and flowers and music on the Embankment, and beauty out of the back yards, and gay and happy buildings. Good taste shall reign, — yet *all* imagination not be banished from painting and architecture —"

"Great is Boston!" chanted Golda; "and Jerome is her prophet!"

"What's that but a see-er? And a painter makes others see what he sees. I will die, but the vision goes on."

He climbed down, and marched into the centre of the room, staring up at Golda thoughtfully.

"How curiously you stand for it all! There

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it is — the slender, immature, boyish body, the wistful face, the pathos of its lonely beauty, as of a flower far out on a rock at sea . . .”

“A Polish girl,” she retorted, “with the Old World’s passion and pain and pessimism in her!—” She emphasized the alliteration with bitter humour.

“What does it matter? No New Englander could ever interpret this picture; — or paint it, either.”

“Or see what you see in the place.” She sat down rather abruptly, and lit a cigarette. “I must be going home, boy!”

He started, abashed. “Home — to Italy? — Now?”

“Well, soon.” She drew her shoulders together. “I’ll die otherwise. Don’t you remember Garibaldi’s cry: ‘One hour of life in Rome is worth a century of common existence’?”

Jerome dropped his brushes and laid his hand on hers. “Who knows it better than I? But you are cold — and it’s August! Have I worn you out? I’m a brute, — But oh, don’t leave me now!”

“‘I’m very tired — no? And this life is so

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very humdrum. Not you," — smiling a little as Jerome looked painfully startled, — "but existence in Cambridge, — the boarding-house, the cemetery — my God!"

She swung her feet over the edge of the scaffolding, and began to chant dreamily: —

"Âme, te souviens-tu, au fond du paradis,
De la Gare d'Auteuil, et les trains de jadis?"

"Don't Golda! Verlaine, just now —"

"There, you see yourself!" She brushed the hair off her forehead, and stretched her arms upwards wearily; all her lithe young body drawn taut and curved as a bow.

Jerome watched her, preoccupied by delight in the lines, struggling with remorse.

"I have n't thought half enough about you. Come along now, and we'll dine at the Tuscany Inn, and have some music."

"And shut our eyes and pretend it's Italy. But it is n't — it is n't!" She opened her eyes wide on him suddenly. "You don't need me any more now!"

"Always!" he cried impetuously. "This summer I've been in Paradise — your talk,

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your Russian and Roman poet-fellows — your wonderful little body —”

“My part is done,” she whispered. “Can I sail for Rome in September?”

“Of course. I’ll see about the steamers.” He walked about, smoking furiously. The bottom seemed to have dropped out of things. Why could not a man paint in peace? These months had been good. Then, catching sight of her pale little face, “You know, all this” — he threw out both hands towards her — “money can’t pay for it. You’ve given so much more than your time, your body, to the work. It’s your soul, Golda; it’s your imagination and charm. The whole thing’s made out of your flesh and blood —”

“Go on!” She had closed her eyes.

Jerome laughed and pulled himself together. “How I rant! But it’s all true, you know.” And with boyish shyness: “I’m not good at thanking . . . Now, we’ll go and dine some place — where we won’t be reminded of Italy.”

XI

Il y a un être qui en s'en allant a emporté le ciel . . .

V. Hugo

GOLDA gone, Jerome wandered about like a soul in torment, spent with the furious labour through the long hot months, and the sadness of accomplishment. He needed to get away and should have gone; but he could not bear to leave the place. The misty landscape in the background of his "Spring," the figures in the foreground, needed his last touches. He lingered on.

It was not till September that he wrote that first letter to Mrs. Osborne which she had decreed was to be the only one. Fragments of it had emerged from time to time; but always the painting claimed him; and it was only when Golda had sailed away that the hunger to express himself became overmastering.

"Lady of Dreams," he wrote, "the garden is dead while you are gone. I have difficulty in preventing autumn sadness from creeping into

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the fresco of Spring. — In place of the brown landscape about me, I see only a white world and a house full of white flowers. I loved your light French furniture, light draperies, lighter carpets! It was so fresh, you remember, there was no place in which to drop a cigarette-ash. You had petals of flowers for dust — impossible house to live in! How the old ghosts must have gaped at the absence of gloom. — They made shadows, in those days, with draperies and screens and stained-glass. You keep everything light. Big tragic things could never happen in your house.

“Do you dare to be frankly pessimistic and sad, now that you are in old civilizations? I have caught the general optimism here. I actually think I am going to do something, make something, new! In Rome, the great centuries, rolling by, leave nothing but dust and dreams. My light-hearted Italians are at bottom bitterly hopeless. They live with sadness, deepened by flashes of gaiety. ‘Only in the Past is there beauty, only in death is truth.’

“But they taste the flying moments, bitter or sweet: they do not merely look on — or over-

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ride them. Perhaps it is wiser to look on, madonna? — Admire the shape of the cup: it is purely classic; the colour of the wine: it sings of Sicilian grapes. The smell, likewise, — but that might go to our heads. . . . On the whole, let us put it back; or, happy thought! (since we are rich) buy it; empty out the heady wine; put it in a cabinet. A rare thing, bought in Sicily, coloured with the dregs of dead passions. Clean it and scour it, but handle it with care — it has a certain price.— ”

“Where have I got to now?” mused Jerome, dismayed; and began again from the words “Sicilian grapes.”

“The little flames that devour all letters will take care of this one, also; but not without leaving something — in your heart.

“In ‘that black place you call your heart,’ I leave all my love-letters, the written and the unwritten, — the most beautiful ones. For you have given me, if not peace, at least the fire that drives. . . .

“And so perhaps you will not grudge me a comfort I’ve taken in your despite, — not altogether in your despite, I trust! but here it is —

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"You've sat in my big empty studio when the last glow faded from it, and dreams came out of the shadows, moving in painted robes. And I beside you, with eyes closed, took all the comfort which your dear hands gave. To the tired body, the tired brain, the tenderness of your voice in the twilight, the gentleness of the place where your heart is housed!

"Ah, Lady of Vain Desires, if you have helped me through these lonely months, be glad! There is nothing in this place that does not speak of you, who are so real, here, and dear and needed.

"The Back Bay is empty. Miss Adest has gone back to Italy. — I miss the Muriel child running down the garden-paths, the music of tender laughter, a graceful figure coming up the street. People are dumpy and drab; there is no slim body left, no, not one. Their clothes are all alike, only worse; there is too much furniture in the world, and too much dust. Oh, for clean snow and bracing winds, and beauty — beautiful voices, beautiful hands! I'm starved . . ."

He ended abruptly; stamped and sent it. "No one," he assured himself, "could call that

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a love-letter! The love-passages are a dressed to her furniture — the rest, a v rage against surroundings. It should distinctly elating to one basking in I gardens.”

Then a ray of common sense illumine darkness. He sent Ailsie and her sister horrible seaside resort, and himself starte the mountains; where he could spend hours lying face downwards, almost cor on the rugged breast of Monadnock.

XII

J'ai fait le serment d'aimer sans espérance,
Mais non pas sans bonheur: je vous vois, c'est assez.

A. DE MUSSET

THE glory of American woods in autumn healed Jerome, body and spirit, sent him bounding back to work, his head full of pictures. With trees he was at home everywhere: he declared that he would always choose the site of his house according to the trees, not the people who lived near him. But he did not love the country, and was really elated to be on the long brick streets again. The individuality of the little red city struck him anew as something intimate, delightful, as he passed over the bridge. The friendly green-and-white awnings on the Embankment suggested the tropical sun from which Bostonians have to find refuge. Even the aëroplanes soaring over the Basin seemed more aloof, suggested higher regions of the spirit, to this fanciful young man.

He had been secretly taking lessons, and now dreamed of owning a monoplane of his own, which he would buy with the proceeds of the

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pictures a dealer in New York had sold for him. And he would have a telephone!

When, at last, this instrument for weal or woe was, literally, installed near the corn-bin in his studio, he felt that he held the threads of real romance. At any moment, by pressing with the lightest touch a spring, he could have and hold at the other end of an electric, magnetic current, the lady of his dreams. . . . Walls melted away, self-consciousness vanished, for the face remained concealed (Jerome was not so sure he liked that); and nothing prevented the complete charm of the game of ball over the telephone but the cruel possibility of disappearance without explanation on the other side.

Only the happiest possibilities, however, must have been in the mind of this sanguine lover when he stole down in his pyjamas on the first golden September dawn after his arrival, to finger his shining new toy. He had dreamed of Her all that night. He could not receive that divinely kind visit without thanking her!

"It may be too early?" He frowned to himself, "At least, I ought to be dressed!"

He came back half an hour later. "I wonder if she would approve of this tie?" (The earl's gift from London.) He had on a stiff high collar. "Perfectly correct," he murmured; and with a beating heart, took off the receiver. Outside the barred window a robin was pulling a preposterously long earthworm out of the grass.

"Number?" came a perfectly unemotional voice, even then at half-past seven of a glorious September morning.

Jerome gave it; and waited. Eons rolled by. He fled in imagination up the stairs, out on the roof, and was springing into his waiting aëroplane, before a man's voice brought him down with a jolt.

"Yes; this is Mrs. Osborne's house. Who is it?"

Jerome, with surprising calm, found himself inquiring of the manservant if Mrs. Osborne had got back from Europe yet.

"Yes, two days ago."

Was she there?

A hesitating answer made Jerome rush on to a cool request to speak with her at once. He had got back only last night — would hold the line.

The voice at the other end moved away. Jerome looked around helplessly for a cigarette; straightened his necktie; thought of his dream again; and forgot everything else.

When the beloved tones sounded over his wire, he was almost too happy to speak. It was only when a peremptory "*Are* you there?" roused him, that he began, without preamble, in French:—

"I wanted your voice to inaugurate my new telephone—There's only one Inauguration, you know."

"I did not know you had a telephone!" The limpid coolness reminded him of a miniature waterfall he had once stood under in Switzerland. He rushed on.

"I am so glad you are back, I could fly!—I am going to fly. May I land on your lawn? No, don't say anything now; you will get used to it—"

"I could not possibly get in a word if I tried!—"

"Oh, won't you say you are glad to see a fellow? After all these months—"

\ "See you!"

"Yes, yes. You seemed glad, last night!"

"Whatever are you talking about?"

"Why, in my dream —" He paused; there was no sound on the other side. The magic memory warmed him. "You were so wonderful! — Not more so than in real life, you know, — only less afraid of showing it! You wore some kind of white velvet: it was very soft, I could feel it . . ."

"Well?"

Again the waterfall. Jerome drew a breath and rushed on in broken English: —

"Oh, amore mio, in my dream, you spoke as if I were your friend. You told me things that were worrying you. It was all extraordinarily practical and natural — that was the wonder of it. You seemed to think I could help. — I only want to hear, *waking*, that you still have need of me!"

There was a little pause. A low voice said: "I do."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! You don't know what you have given me. — Now I will ring off. — You are well? You loved Italy?"

"So much, I can't speak of it —"

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Jerome rang off by laying his forehead gently against the shining cold metal. He felt as though he had been holding the hands of the two beings he loved most in the world — Italy, and Mary Osborne.

Then he raised his face laughing. He feared he was going to build a tabernacle around that telephone of his! It had held her voice, had brought him her golden tones, after months and months of waiting and oceans rolling between.

XIII

La Calomnie, messieurs! . . .

BEAUMARCHAIS

LIKE most New Englanders, Mrs. Osborne believed that her life was inevitably dedicated to the large army of relatives whom chance, or the choice of others, had imposed upon her. To them her personal desires and preferences were to be subjected, and her life arranged accordingly. No step could be taken without considering the effect it would have upon the whole clan of Osbornes in all its branches.

She had given up her wish to spend the winter in Paris with her little girl, where everything beautiful and moving would have filled their lives, for the sake of her younger brother, Fred, a sickly youth who had just entered Harvard. Their parents were dead; and the large body of aunts and cousins would have been inexpressibly shocked if she had not been there to see him through his first year in college.

So she had closed her Beacon Street house;

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and to be nearer the boy, had come to live for a while in Cambridge, which frankly bored her. She tried, by following the courses of a learned professor on the Elizabethan Dramatists, and by supervising her little girl's education, to stifle the natural longings of a woman, young and beautiful and born to receive homage in a larger world.

This, then, was Mrs. Osborne's Duty as defined by all the Osbornes, including herself; and Jerome's whole being rose in revolt against the situation when he returned to Cambridge and found it unchanged.

He met her at a formal reception at her own house, surrounded by professors and their wives, by the élite of the intellectual society of the place. The representative of the great clan of the Osbornes had been received by them graciously. They felt that she belonged to a family accustomed to being looked up to, and with all the signs of an ancient race. One of its members was a judge of the Supreme Court; another a Bishop; a third had drunk himself to death; an uncle was president of the college; another was in an insane asylum.

Mrs. Osborne bore up under this strain with amazing fortitude. She was invariably gentle with all her relatives. Few knew her as her boy-cousin had known her in Newport. They would have been amazed and a little shocked if any one had ventured to intimate that Mary Osborne was witty, had a brilliant *espièglerie*, was fit to cope with the loveliest women that ruled Paris. She had such timid deference in her ways with these intellectual giants of Cambridge. But she did not draw them out. She could never quite forget the delightful lightness of the philosophers and writers she had met on the other side: a lightness easily termed shallow, because they took so much more interest in life as it appeared at the moment than in any theories — even their own. And their own they exposed in society, at least, as a game, however seriously they might treat them in their closet. Mary Osborne believed in thoroughness in work, but in lightness in play; and this made her a little lonely in Boston, a loneliness shared by most of the unfortunate intelligent people there, as distinguished from the intellectuals.

It is not surprising that poor Jerome should

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come to grief in navigating these shoals through which Mrs. Osborne had learned to steer so serenely.

He had not been able to speak to her alone, for weeks; to be with these people was, apparently, another of her Duties. With the fruit of the summer heavy in his head and heart, ideas and projects for new work bursting to be shown to her, it was galling to see such sterile beings consuming her time and energy.

Jerome, longing to demolish the whole fabric of Family, Duty, Society, found his only available point of attack in the lectures: and against this innocuous pastime he stormed with his usual hot-headedness, one afternoon in the midst of the learned circle.

"The Elizabethan Dramatists in a school-room! But have you ever *read* 'Vittoria Accoromboni' or the tremendous 'Duchess'? Is n't one's own library the only place for such splendid blood and thunder? I'd rather have old Skeat or Taine sitting opposite to me in sober parchment than listen to those mighty folios cut down ad usum Delphini — milk-and-watered for spinsters! And how can sitting inert, while

some one pours material into you, ever lead to 'culture'? Strong food for Bostonians, unless taken in such homeopathic doses, vicariously. — Why don't you go out and see the steel-workers or the bronze-casters or the electric plants? They're *alive*! Or go see what the sculptors and painters are dreaming of, — not in dead museums, but in living studios. Life, life! . . . Was n't there some one who just left a will bequeathing I don't know how many thousands to buy a picture by an American artist 'no longer living'? Great heavens! Have we worked out of the slough of the past fifty years and attained a band of living artists turning out sincerest stuff, just to fall back on the Dead again? But cheer up, while there is death, there is hope! and their turn will come later, when their hand is inert. . . . Oh, it's enough to make a man swear, to see the millions spent on dealers for second-rate copies of Greek marbles, or obscure masters who did not know how to draw, or stirring up the dust of dead civilizations, — while the Present is teeming with promise! Cure bad art by drastic pruning, by seeing all kinds; but acknowledge the good

when it's born! And if you want fastidious choice, why, your museums are full of men trained to see and know, who are only too glad to give their brains to reveal, to analyze, whatever comes into the crucible, and pass it on to others. Dead and gone ways of seeing and painting are valuable in art just as far as history is: for the interpretation of human nature, of life. People, like myself, surrounded since childhood by the greatest art of the ages, see a maquette in a dingy studio, and take off our hats to a master: the rest of you wait till he's dead . . ."

He broke off, flushed and laughing; and one man there, a member of the Ten, called out a humorous "Bravo!"

The rest looked down their noses in awkward silence; till a stout and dignified matron, with a skirt too short in front, remarked to her neighbour that Maeterlinck's later plays were far inferior to his earlier ones. All eagerly concurred: and in the midst of this high intellectual symposium of crockery, the bull took himself off.

He raged at having "talked too much."

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What good did it do? and he had spoilt the serenity of his lady's circle. She, he remembered with surprise, had seemed to approve him, in her quietly humorous way; but he had been made aware more than once of a kind of hostility in the people about him. Since his return he had seen faces turn away that used to greet him; not among his friends, but among those whom he had carelessly taken for granted. He was almost morbidly sensitive where friendship was concerned; but the opinions of "persons of consequence" left him quite unmoved. He dismissed, therefore, these suspicions with a shrug; but it was not so easy to dismiss the fact that young Osborne no longer "dropped in" on him, that one or two other people failed to see him when he passed.

He racked his brain to find what he had done, or said, — apart from that innocent dynamic outburst, — that would account for such treatment; and bethinking himself of his relation of the clock, went to see her one Sunday afternoon.

When he left her, he was in a sufficiently sardonic frame of mind. Once or twice he

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laughed; but he was sick at heart, and he knew he could get no rest till he had cleared up the whole preposterous business.

Mr. Frederick Osborne was "not at home" when he reached Randolph Hall; but Jerome said he would wait; and marching straight upstairs, caught the boy crossing the corridor to his room.

"Look here, Osborne, I must see you a moment. It's urgent!" And as he saw the other draw himself up and hesitate, he gave one of his winning smiles: "See here, old man, I want to get to the bottom of this thing. You've been too good a friend not to help me now. — It's all a misapprehension, you know!"

"I am not questioning your conduct, Leigh," said the other, with all the dignity of a freshman.

"No, but I am," Jerome's humour got the better of him. "What *has* that scoundrel Jerome been up to?"

"The whole thing is so distasteful to me —"

"Come, man," said the painter sharply, "the distaste is quite mutual, I assure you. Only, as it concerns other people besides ourselves, you

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have got to hear me out. — Will you come with me, or shall I speak here?"

Osborne unwillingly led the way into his study and shut the door with ostentatious care.

"As far as I'm concerned," remarked Jerome, lighting a cigarette, "you may call in the whole caboodle. Will you smoke?"

"No, thanks." The boy sat down and studied the points of his shoes. Jerome strode up and down. Finally, letting out a mighty "Ouf!" he looked across at his opponent with one of his odd, crooked smiles. "What a thing dignity is, world without end! I never have any, myself, until it's offended. And now, I merely feel like taking a bath. Only it would take the Charles River to get rid of this mud. For a month I've apparently been walking in a sort of quagmire of indefinite suspicions. I would n't have bothered my head about it, if people I care for had not been troubled by it. But now, I find some of them actually believe — What have you heard?"

The abrupt question staggered the boy.

"Nothing — that pretty model of yours was

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seen dining with you. People supposed that she was —”

Jerome gave a disgusted exclamation. “Because I took her out once or twice? The poor little thing was generally too tired to do anything but go straight home to bed. — Now for facts. You know, a year or two ago, I was painting in Rome. My friend, Monty Warren, made a picture of a girl whom he took me to see. She was a Pole, brought up in Paris, who had come to Italy recently to live and called herself Miss Adest. He had known her family in Paris; and, finding that she was trying, because of a great trouble, to support herself, he asked her to sit for him. After a time I, too, painted her, out-of-doors, in old gardens. Well, she would pose for no one else; though some of the sculptors there were crazy to get her. She was well-born, you see, — some tragedy in her life; Monty knew; I never asked. She was a brave little woman; and in that city of scandal, no one has ever connected her name with any man’s. She lived with a girl friend, an artist, at the top of the Spanish Steps. Over here, I got her lodgings with a good woman I knew,

and carried out the frescoes with her. She returned to Rome when they were done; and for the rest — why, man, you could not have touched the tip of her little finger with the end of your mahl-stick!”

He ended with a laugh; and the boy got to his feet and held out a hand, stammering: “Of course, *I* understand; but the family — For my sister’s sake, I had to —”

“Did *she* believe it?” Jerome struggled with a sickening sense of disappointment, bitterness, disgust.

“She never believed a word of it. She defended you openly once, though I tried to stop her —”

“Oh, God bless her!” The artist sank down, his head in his hands. Relief struggled with rage that she should have been driven to such a step, and it was with a new weariness in his movements that he rose to go. “Good-bye. I’m off to Europe. Yes — Don’t let it worry you, or her. Monty wrote me lately urging me to sail to Italy with him ‘for a breath of fresh air,’” he laughed shortly, “before going back to work in New York. I’ll go, I think; though I’ll

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return to work in America." He held out his hand. "Thanks for hearing me when I asked you —"

The boy cleared his throat. "Don't go, Leigh. You'll live it down. Of course, we know what artists are — and I, at least, can make allowances —"

"What do you mean, you puppy?" Jerome stared at the complacent youth; and his hand slowly clenched itself as a light began to dawn. "I'm much obliged," he sneered. "This Christian forgiveness is quite out of place in my case. And 'we artists' have a rather different sort of mind, I fancy. Your sister, at least, knows that."

"I wish to leave my sister out of the question," said the other, stiffening.

"I don't," said Jerome. "I intend to marry her some day, and she has a right to know all the circumstances."

The boy's jaw had fallen, and Jerome waited grimly till he had recovered himself.

Then, "I think the subject is ended? If you only knew how absurd your whole conjectures have been, in this affair, you would *laugh* — even though you *are* a freshman!"

The other struggled a moment, and then, to Jerome's intense relief, relapsed into boyhood again: "If you have n't got cheek! — But you don't look frightfully gay, yourself! I should think you would *want* to leave this beastly place, anyhow. What fun is there here? — No one of your own sort to play with; and if you play with the other sort — every one holding up holy hands of horror!"

Jerome could not help laughing. "As it happens, I've got over that stage. All I want, is to work in peace, and to marry —"

A humorous realization that this placid whippersnapper stood to her for Family, Duty, Society, affecting her whole life, made Jerome throw an added stateliness into his leave-taking: "We shall meet on the other side. My staying now would not stop the chattering tongues; — and, against stupidity, you know, even the gods fight in vain."

The boy followed undecidedly to the stairs and peered down after him: "Well, if that is n't the coolest beggar! I wonder if, after all, what he told me was the truth?"

XIV

Fior di limone,
E tu sei stato lo mio primo amore,
E l'ultimo sarai. . . .

STORNELLO

JEROME's farewell to Mrs. Osborne came on the day he sailed, and consisted simply of a mass of red roses, without a letter.

The night before, he had been dined by his friends the "Wharf-Rats"; and they had given him so warm a send-off at their picturesque nautical quarters that he had been curiously touched and surprised. Now that he was leaving, they had things to say to him; and it was not till midnight that a convivial motor left him at his gate.

He had wished to walk through the trees alone; and the wind mingled with a thousand night-sounds as he stood in the dim temple of cedars staring at the white sky.

Her windows were open to the night, but dark. The golden October moon had set. He heard the sad insistent sound of the crickets; and wondered if she ever lay and listened to it

and longed to escape into the magical night. He was calling, calling to her through the darkness. His voice would grow fainter and farther, day by day, as the ocean grew between them. Soon, even the memory of it would leave her; and no trace, but the painting on the wall, would remain of a spring of youth and desire battering at the gates of her heart.

Into the little grove of acacias, whose sweet, secret perfume had become the very essence of that spring gone by, Jerome crept to lay his head against a slender bole. He pulled a branch down to his face, but there were no white clusters left to mock him with their promise of wine — pale dreams of grapes without substance, white and dim and sweet. Only the long spikes remained, with which that gentlest of all trees surrounds herself. The acacia tree embodied Her, as she embodied New England; but he was not given to faded leaves, and he let the branch snap back as he turned to go. His profound masculine understanding of woman evinced itself later in his summing-up of the question as he stood watching the shores of New England receding beyond the horizon.

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"I must go without telling her, or explaining. She would find it painful, embarrassing. She must not be brought into contact with the brutal realities of life."

But when the ship had been half a day at sea, the steward searched him out where he had found refuge, far from the popular Monty and his crowd, and handed him a marconigram.

In the spray-swept after-deck he pressed it to his eyes and lips. There was only one who would send so brief, intangible a message, where even the handwriting was concealed.

No word she could say would bring him so vivid a sense of her presence as that thin envelope with the unbroken seal. The perfume of white violets, acacias, lilies-of-the-valley; the upturned faces of pansies, like snowflakes, floating in a Japanese jar in one of her rooms, — all slight, inconsequential things that made the sum of her, — came over him with a force that blinded his eyes with tears.

It was not that he did not feel the true woman underneath, the courage, like a steel blade, the pride that kept all but high thoughts away from her; even the tenderness. . . . But that his

mind would not break through those delicate veils of hers, or dare to guess at human longings which she would not admit to herself.

It was not, he felt with a flash of unwonted insight, that she dreaded the body, the divine sanity of Nature, or the red blood that keeps it living; but that she had made up her mind to put all that aside. For what considerations of Duty, Family, Society, she chose to do so, he was too impatiently scornful to inquire. It was the New England conscience, that Herod, massacring the innocent, letting the wicked go free.

The young man had let himself be lashed by wind and spray and his own bitter thoughts into such a state of mind that a sudden panic seized him that the very message he was holding should prove unreal.

He tore open the envelope. Two lines:—
“The roses came, and you are gone. But I have the Spring. Perhaps we may meet in Paris in June. — M. O.”

And this was October! He felt the big ship pounding on relentlessly, and himself a caged beast inside of her. — Had he done right, after

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all, to leave her without letting her hear the truth from himself? Was she not capable of judging? She had continued to see him when others turned their backs on him. But she had not seen him alone. She had told him she was his friend, and had staunchly upheld him before others. Then — had Italy taught her to care?

He would go mad with such thoughts unaccompanied. That he had, by his own act, cut himself off from her at the very moment when her loyalty drew her to him, became a supposition that stabbed him with pain and rapture. In all that dulness and chatter she had made no allusion whatever to the subject of the scandal. She had seemed too proud even to notice it.

He read and re-read the words: "You are gone. But I have the Spring." — Was it his fresco she meant, or — a flash of something piercing sweet went through him — the spring they had spent together?

He was getting fanciful, absurd. He fought down the mounting exaltation. She would understand that he left her to save her from stupid talk: and her message to him was kind. She

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could afford to be kind, now. For the rest, he would never know. The Atlantic Ocean swept between; and her very words, intangible like herself, had come by wireless, committing her to nothing.

PART II

TEMPTATION IN ROME

Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio
Per aspro mare a mezza notte il verno.

PETRARCA

Voici le relais, vivat! Oh, que tu es doux, que tu es salubre
et parfois salulaire, voyage, voyage lointain! —

GOGOL, *Âmes mortes*

PART II

TEMPTATION IN ROME

XV

Tal la vedrai qual gli occhi la videro miei, qual sempre
Nell' ansiosa notte l'anima mia la vede.

Elegia romana

WHEN you draw near to the Enchanted Land, there are signs in the heavens and on the earth. Long golden clouds sleep on the Mediterranean; Orion, with a more brilliant belt strides eagerly over the sea.

The Alameda at Gibraltar gives the first pang of remembrance, with its palms and oranges and passion-flowers. There is a sense of being very near to the Hesperides: from which there is but one step of triumphant progression into 'Boccaccio's garden, and its faëry, the love, the joyance, and the gallantry.'

Monty, with his genial manners and good looks, appeared to own the key to these delectable places. He hinted, not darkly, that pleasure was to the fore.

"No more roof-gardens, Jerome, my boy,

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but the real article! Do you remember the well of cypresses on that Tuscan farm near Colle? And the old castle in the Maremma where they apologized for its modernity — 1580? And the brigand chief shot at the gates just before we arrived there? And the carabinieri, genial fellows, who clapped you into a real dungeon for shouting 'Viva il socialismo'? And how the contessa confessed that the only literature in the house was a cook-book, — though you had discovered letters of Enea Silvio and other worthies in the archives of their townhouse, —”

“Fetch your breath, Monty!”

They were standing fur-coated, in the glow of dawn, breasting the keen wind on the upper deck, hungry for the first sight of Italy. Peak beyond peak, the purple islands rose from a sea like a silver shield. The growing radiance touched with fire the great religious mountains: over the Italian land rose the sun.

Jerome drew in his breath with something like a sob. It was too beautiful, this return to a land so loved, after the year of exile. He had drunk too deep and desperately of the magic cup not to greet with a cry of exultation the glory that

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was flooding his heart, as the sun came over Vesuvius. Memories of a stormy youth, precocious, not free from passion or pain, held him, even as he remembered that by austerities and dreams, he had almost gained a new soul in the New World.

Monty handed him a steaming coffee-cup and they drank and munched away happily as they threaded those incredible islands. By the time the port was reached, and golden sprays of mimosa danced along the quays, and boats put out to greet them, and shouts could be heard from the shore, Jerome was so tingling with the sensations of his buried youth that he could hardly stay on the ship.

In the midst of the clamour and crowd at disembarking, he caught sight of a slim, tawny-haired figure wearing Parma violets, standing in the midst of a group which was clearly waving to him.

"Golda!" he exclaimed to Monty; and wildly waved his hat. "Why, there's Savelli!—and Rezia, and old Paolaccio looking cheerful for once! All the Old Guard, Monty,—che bellezza, che schiccherìa!"

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The band was playing madly, the people on shore and those on the ship rushed together; and Jerome found himself, with laughter and tears, being embraced on both cheeks by his Roman friends.

"Hey?" shouted Monty, slapping Paolaccio on the shoulder, "was n't this idea of mine — of a gita together — the culmination of my genius?"

"Did *you* think of bringing them down here?" exclaimed Jerome, who had never known Monty to keep a secret before.

"Of course!" answered Savelli. "The great Monty thought of it, and telegraphed from Algiers. We gathered together our plaids and our dog," — indicating Rezia's wolf-hound, — "and rushed from Rome, to embrace you and re-conduct you in triumph!"

They linked arms; and the whole six stepped firmly into the first botte they met, overflowing the steps, and fighting off the clamouring rival cabmen. With a last triumphant curse, their driver cracked his whip, and the ancient and bony horse shambled off to a chorus of six powerful young voices singing to the sun.

XVI

*Si grida una sequela di nomi di
paesi e di città lontane . . .*

MALOMBRA

No more congenial crowd could be imagined than the little band which assembled that afternoon at the station and boarded the train for Pompeii.

The two Americans, in high spirits, had taken charge of the party, and Monty's exuberant generosity (induced by a recent string of commissions in New York) drew after him the other four.

Don Orazio Savelli, blond and blue-eyed younger son of an old princely house, had been a friend of theirs for years. His manners, when he was not acting like a faun, were stately and distinguished. The other Roman, Paolo Corti, was familiarly known as Paolaccio partly because he was so unpleasantly ugly, and partly because of his gloomy disposition, — good looks and smiles being inseparable in an Italian mind. He had, however, great talent as an etcher, and

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so sinister and powerful an imagination that he could hold the most frivolous spell-bound. Besides which, his melancholy had a basis that could not fail to touch the hardest heart: his best friend, while staying with him on his farm in the Abruzzi, had just eloped with his mistress; thus putting an end to a faithful attachment of thirteen years. — Everybody agreed that thirteen was a fatal number. Rezia, always stinging, and with a side glance at Jerome, declared that one of the nicest young men in Rome had lately sat down thirteen at table — and was now married to an American girl.

Jerome blew rings into the air as he lazily scrutinized Golda's artist-friend. She was tall and dark, walked with a swinging step, not without a free beauty of its own, and professed the utmost contempt for men. Her heavy eyes, full of a smouldering fire, brooded over the volcanic landscape they were passing, as though recognizing a kindred spirit there. A Russian wolf-hound always accompanied her; and both were the jealous guardians of the little Polish girl.

Golda herself had changed in a way he could

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not define. It was not that she looked older: she had a glow of beauty about her that made her seem less than her twenty-five years. She had the same clever, free way of wearing her clothes that gave her an indefinable air of breeding at variance with her manner of careless comradeship. She was more of a woman, more elusive: more dangerous, he would have said later, had he studied her; but his mind was too full of the passion of Italy and colour, to see anything individual in her at this time. Her manner was the same to all, with more decision in her movements. He learned that she was supporting herself by giving piano-lessons and by playing at people's houses.

Savelli, who liked both girls, talked to him frankly about them. It was a difficult position for a young woman to hold in Rome, he said, without a man to protect her. But, though gossip was rife, there was nothing in either Rezia's or Golda's life which connected them with any of the artists or politicians who frequented the loggia on the Spanish Steps. Rezia was as wild as a Bacchante on the hills, letting no man touch her; and though the girls lived

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quite outside the pale of Society, they were respected there; and the most brilliant men in Rome sought invitations to the musical evenings in their little apartment in the clouds.

This somewhat unique position they were able to maintain by their undoubted talent and indomitable pride, in a city where such gifts create an aristocracy of their own. Rezia indeed was not without family; but she loathed from the bottom of her heart the bourgeois tastes of her relatives. Her mother was dead. Her father had made new ties, by marrying a woman whom she could not respect; and beyond an annual visit, Rezia never went near them, but supported herself by her painting for which she had created a spasmodic demand. She had had to fight, of course, for this independence, which no Italian family could understand or countenance for a moment; but she was now free of all shackles, and jealously anxious to pursue a life which was able to feed her savage and half-starved intelligence.

The Old Guard had some difficulty in all piling inside a single compartment of the crowded train. The wolf-hound was first sat upon by the

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party, in a vain effort to conceal him; then brazenly bargained for with the furtive conductor. Monty had not yet appeared, though the train was already late in starting; and heads were craned out of windows to see what great official was delaying them.

The young American walked placidly down the platform, a cigar in his mouth, nodding to the guards, who then swayed their arms, and shouted "Pronti — partenza!" and with a great screeching of whistles, the ramshackle little train started gaily off. There was a cry of "Ahhh!" and they all settled down to enjoy Vesuvius and its olive-groves. When these palled, a political discussion arose in which every one spoke at once with terrific passion, shaking fists in each other's faces, but parting amicably when Pompeii was reached.

As the door was opened, Aspor the hound made a flying leap and upset his mistress, who was descending with her usual tragic dignity. She fell her length, and the mimosa she wore was scattered over the platform. Every man present rushed gallantly to her assistance; but she was angry at her own clumsiness, and rose

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to her feet unaided, marching off like an offended goddess.

As they ascended the steep paved streets, Savelli whispered to Jerome that this was all owing to Paolaccio's well-known jettatura.

The American laughed and picking up a spray of the mimosa, stuck it in his button-hole.

"Unhappy loves!" shouted Savelli and Paolaccio in chorus. "Viva Girolamo! who is the lady?"

Golda came to his assistance with some malice. "It is not for a woman he wears the yellow flower; he is in love with a place. Its name is — New England."

"Golda!" threatened Jerome.

Corti and Rezia wished to be informed what place that was, and where it existed on the map?

Savelli broke in magnanimously. "We are all unhappy lovers," he beamed, — "save Golda and Rezia, who are hard as rocks. Amico Monty is always losing his heart, vero? — " Monty nodded vehemently. — "And I, though not in love with any one I can think of, just at present, have suffered much from the passion."

Peace having been thus restored, they turned

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their attention to the house of Pomponio Leto. They leant over the little court with its adorable blue-green bronzes, and discussed the domestic arrangements of that worthy's household with keen curiosity and no little erudition.

Straggling behind the other tourists, leaving the guard's explanations unheeded, when the sun had set and the crowds were gone, they gathered in the empty amphitheatre from which is shown the marvellous panorama of mountains and sea. A sympathetic guardian, touched by Monty's free-handedness, allowed them to linger in this paradise; and called off the bloodhounds which at sunset are let loose to prowl about the empty ruins.

Savelli and Corti strode into the arena, swung their cloaks over one shoulder, pulled their hats down over their eyes, and began to declaim in Latin hexameters snatches of comedy or heroic verse, as their memory and a strongly mock-heroic spirit prompted them. Their enthusiasm was so contagious that even the guardian joined in appropriately with the booming notes of Garibaldi's Hymn, scattering the ghosts of dead Greeks and Latins.

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Then Golda sprang on a fallen capital, and waving her arms, pointed to the fatal mountain, shouting a Greek antistrophe of woe, as though warning them against the impending doom. The sky was flaming. Blue shadows crept up the broken tiers of the theatre.

Rezia, huddled in her cloak, stole after Jerome like one of the Furies, as though bent on destroying him. The American was smoking a cigarette, his eyes fixed on Golda, and his mind as usual busily sketching. Finding she could not distract his attention, Rezia twisted the newspaper she was carrying into a torch, lighted it, and swung the flaming mass around her head, till all present gave a shout of fear. With the dark masses of hair tossed off her forehead, her flowing cloak and wild eyes seen in the red glare of the ruins, she looked the spirit of Discord or War, superbly reckless. Just as it reached her fingers, she quenched the flame hissing in a pool at her feet.

The melodramatic action of the Roman girl amused Jerome; and in mockery of it, or to contribute his quota of entertainment to the company, he turned a double somersault with

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great nicety against the western sky-line. Then he strode up to Monty, who was quaffing imaginary beakers of wine, with one arm resting on Golda's shoulder, and exclaimed: "Vale, vir amplissime et nobilissime!" threw his coat over Golda, and sped down the empty street with her, pursued by the hue and cry of all the brigata.

They stopped, laughing and out of breath, near the house of the Count of Turin, and Jerome pulled her down on the step beside him.

The roofless walls were full of purple shadows; every stone in the crooked streets stood out sharp-cut against the crimson light. Beyond the gate, where two stone-pines stood, lonely guardians of a deserted city, the great mountain slumbered and dreamed, as though incapable of any violence.

"I am a sculptor from the Ægean, and you, a Greek slave!" whispered Jerome, his imagination fired by the light, by the dumb passion of the tragic place. "Will you fly with me from this doomed city?"

She whispered, her lips against his shoulder: "To the end of the world, beloved!"

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' At the station, they all met breathless and bantering and very hungry. They found only some white wine; in which they drank unanimously to Jerome's unhappy loves. Then the empty train picked them up, and swung them singing home through the dusk towards the far lights of Naples.

XVII

Dulche, amara memoria di giornadas
Fuggitivas cum doppia pena mea,
Qui quanto piùs l'istringo, sunt passadas . . .

ARAOILLA

THIS first effervescence of spirits and almost all their spare money having been got rid of in such delightful ways, Jerome and Monty determined to settle down to a hard winter's work in Rome. It was easier for Jerome to accomplish this, with his fresh New England energy, than for his more Europeanized companion. The lure of beauty or pleasure, the call of the Campagna, most potent of all, inviting mad gallops beyond the aqueducts towards Rocca di Papa or the solitudes of Soracte, dragged Monty, weakly protesting, from the studio.

He had many friends in the gay world, both among the Romans and the Romanized Americans. He would have persuaded his comrade to follow him; but Jerome laughingly shook his head at these seductions. He even succeeded in getting Monty away from the sumptuous apart-

ment in one of the hotels that curtsy around the palace of the Queen-Mother, and induced him to take a studio on the Pincian Hill.

This overlooked the Aurelian Wall, with a far vista of Alban Mountains, the stone-pines that crown the Janiculum, and the deep ilex woods of the Borghese and Medici villas. At sunrise the valley was drowned in purple shadows, streaked with silver mists rising from the Tiber. It filled Jerome's soul with contentment; and after a long day's work, he would hang over the flimsy balcony of his room, high up, sucking his pipe and asking nothing more of gods or men.

For in those days he was nourished greatly on hopes. In spite of the frowns of far-away Cambridge, in spite of the silence of his divine Mrs. Osborne, Jerome felt that his dreams would one day come true: even as his lifelong passion for colour was coming true on his canvases.

He wove the romance and sadness of the magic city around her. It was of her he thought as he lingered with the rare congregation at vespers in the little church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin. The purity, the simplicity, the delicate

reticence of colour about the place were so like her. — Ave, Mary, full of grace, Star of the Morning, Lily among Thorns, Tower of Ivory, Garden Enclosed! Her name was glorified for him everywhere, by the poetry and worship of the Old World.

Up in his tower, on a stormy evening, by the light of a Tuscan lamp, Jerome sent out his heart to her across the sea:—

“I do not know if I may write to my Lady of Pale Flowers, but I could write endlessly of her. . . . She is a book in seven volumes, of which I have but opened the first; and lest I exhaust it all too soon, this young Sybil has snatched away the others to herself. It is written in a language I never learned: Latin does not help me here; English still less. She is a stranger, far from me, — this woman of my own people.

“I see her stepping like Botticelli’s Primavera, her robe of flowers about her, through the long brick streets — where primroses spring up in her footsteps, and flights of little Loves, winged Erotes of Myrrina, rise up from dim museum halls to watch and follow her.

“The storm is beating itself out against my

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windows; I can scarcely see her face through the wild sheets of rain. How bravely she breasted the wind by the riverside! Through rain or snow, she walked as though we were in some pleasant meadow; as indeed I think we were. And when the sunshine came, what sunshine, making long violet shadows in the snow. The driven snow is a part of her, white as the violets she wore. Peaks of the Jungfrau call to her. . . . What am I to write of such things?

"Yet I am one who aims for the high peaks, in art, in love, in nature. We painters, to the day we die, are in love with the unattainable —

"' For we are only true to the far lights
We follow singing over valley and hill.'

"It is Calenture, — 'green Paradise-groves in the waste ocean waters,' that exist because we *see* them. I do not idealize her: but she stands to me for great things. And these things are there because I saw them: all that nature intended her to be, all her dreams in the sadness of her eyes, the tears that will never be shed, the laughter that died long ago. I called to the child in her; and she loved, not me, but the dreams I brought back to her. I was but a

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wandering voice singing of love in the summer streets, calling on her to dance, when her heart was heavy. . . .”

Jerome dropped his head on his hand as he ended — “How impossible, impossible it seems! Can my voice ever reach her across the world and the desert of her own heart! It is in America that I must win her, in her land and mine. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by violence: and the violent carry it away.’

“See, I am back in New England with her now. There is a bridge of stars across the river, and the wind is singing a mighty song. Here and Now is the land of romance, of striving and adventure; where the sun sets no less redly, and the moon shines no less strangely, than in Arcady or Rome.”

XVIII

Ainsi finit le jour, emportant brusquement
Fictions et fumée et tout l'enivrement . . .
Tout est mort, tout est vide! On est pris de dégoût,
Je suis las de penser . . .

GRIBOËDOV

OTHER people began to discover the charm of the studio by the Walls of Aurelian, to which Jerome's pink travelling-tub and Monty's duelling-pistols gave so homelike an appearance. It was hard to keep enthusiastic visitors out of it. Irruptions of American girls with penetrating voices, Jerome, indeed, put a stop to. But Savelli would drop in to smoke a cigarette at sunset and contemplate his riding-boots after a long day at Cento Celle; as did one or two amazons, with their escorts in pink coats; or a tall lancer of Novara whom they nicknamed the Soldatino; or the beautiful Hungarian chanoinesse, who went by the name of the Galantuomo, because of being so perfect a sport.

Toasted maritozzi (with pinoli) or — when Monty was flush — petits-fours from Röntger & Singer, were consumed; while Jerome, leaning

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over the balcony, absently gazed at the priests playing football in Villa Borghese, — kicking up their skirts with astonishing agility and enjoyment. When a young moon rose in the flushed sky, it was not unusual to hear a man's voice break out under the window, accompanied by a violin. Jerome took a curious interest in this wandering musician, since hearing, through their boy, Benedetto, that he had killed his wife in a fit of jealousy, and was terribly unhappy, going about singing with his little girl, and careless as to whether he lived or died. She had been very beautiful, the wife, and drew all eyes. So he beat her to death and was sent in gallera; from whence he was only released on the birth of an heir to Casa Savoia. The heart-breaking music of that voice, and the instrument held carelessly against the body, became a part of Jerome's thoughts through the Roman spring, when the long austerity of labour and the hunger of his youth drove him to solitary wanderings about the city.

They did not often have enough to eat; and the trattorie they patronized provided everything but nourishing food. From Benedetto

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they had learned to get a meal for twelve soldi which was chiefly formidable for its bulk.

But models abounded, and ideas. They worked from eight till noon; breakfasted, slept, and were out at five, to flâneur with Savelli on the Corso; or brood over bas-reliefs on the Aventine.

Up in the ubbione of the Costanzi, they shouted and hissed with the gods; came back, by moonlight, arm-in-arm with the misogynist Paolaccio, singing, "O bionda, rossa, bruna"; and now and then (in the American Colony) sold a picture. They were, at the same time, happy and desperate and melancholy; the winter, with its distant snows and near sunny walls was an intoxication to them, and they lived altogether in the present.

Monty, indeed, shared in other pleasures, less fastidious. But his friend found a satisfaction, dear to the heart of youth, in going off by himself and being miserable in the tragic streets of Rome. The dusty squalor of the pleasure-seeking crowd saddened him, no less than the puffs of pink smoke in the Campagna, which told him that spring was at hand.

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Spring was a pain and a longing, unknown in harder climes. The jasmine and the passion-flowers in the little cells of the Terme were like tiny fingers plucking at his heart. The enervating force of the scirocco wasted him: and he was filled with strange longings, pangs of forgotten loves in a city filled to the brim by the exhalations of passions for over two thousand years. Temptations were thrown in his way: but were rather not seen than resisted. He found refuge from the clamour of his blood in deep flights over the Campagna from the hangars near Cento Celle. He learned to direct his hired machine; and the first fierce leap of the heart as he soared up into the blue cup of the sky above the aqueducts, drove all but exultant thoughts from his brain. New England became a dream; but, like all his dreams of beautiful things, a goal of passion which his indomitable will would attain. The more he saw of the social life of Rome,—and in previous years he had drunk of the life to the dregs,—the more he knew that his heart and brain would only be satisfied by something utterly different. The people he cared for most in the city itself lived anchorites'

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lives there. His friendship with a beautiful Roman woman, that winter, was based on a mutual scorn for the crowd, a mutual love of the desolate Campagna; and in her noble reticence and disillusionment he found the only peace he knew.

But he was a healthy young man, longing for a life of his own; an ardent worker and ardent lover, who wanted quite frankly a companion who could share both his thoughts and the no less vital and joyous desires of his body. He loved life, children, danger, and work: could give himself to each in turn with undiminished ardour; but with a loyalty to the past which deepened their meaning. The spring was working potently in him; and to his new restlessness, the utter silence across the water now added a tinge of desperation.

In the stark ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, or the cloisters of the Terme, where the happy Greek marbles are woven round by sunshine and yellow roses, he strolled on Sundays with Savelli. The young Roman was (away from the Corso) a delightful companion, witty and full of the flavour of antiquity dispensed with a light hand — a quality that struck Jerome afresh,

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after the solemnities of Cambridge. And like most Romans, Don Orazio had a streak of melancholy which found vent through Carducci or Leopardi, musically chanted as they strolled about the ruins, where blood-red anemones lifted their calyxes amid the dark acanthus leaves. He confessed to Jerome that he had never been in the Forum in his life; though the Jesuit priests took him by it daily when he was a boy. But he had a deep love, like Jerome, for his young United Italy; and had done his share of fighting in Tripoli, when the nation rose as one man to pour out its blood and money in the desert.

It was this quality, so different from the commercial greed and hypocrisy of other nations, that drew the young painter back to Rome even when he felt that it was draining him of strength and hope. For the city of fountains and flowers reeks of despair. "Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amamus!" sang the ancient Roman. And the modern Italian, loving his sad city beyond any happiness that can be found outside it, whispers back: "Un desiderio di morir si sente."

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Certainly one lonely human had nearly taken the fatal step, when Jerome inadvertently stumbled into the heart of the trouble, and insisted on sharing it.

He had not seen Golda for months when, having packed up his three pictures and shipped them off to the Paris Salon, he came up to the loggia on the Spanish Steps one hot April morning, unable either to work or think. The girls were out; but the little servant knew him, and let him wait in the big cool music-room. The tone of the place was black-and-gold, rather bare; there were one or two extraordinarily good things in it. By the piano was a single iris in a Chinese vase of wonderful bronze.

Jerome sat down and let his hands wander over the keys, staring out through the arches of the loggia, at the red-tiled roofs, the pink and blue shirts fluttering in the hot wind, and the vendors of oranges playing morra on the Spanish Steps. The yellow towers of the Trinità burned against a black sky. His hands fell listlessly on his knees.

The little servant had gone below to talk to a neighbour. The door into the hall was left

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open, and presently Jerome saw Golda enter and walk towards her room. He called out carelessly and let his hands crash on a chord.

The little Pole started, and turned a furtive white face to the music-room. She could not see him behind the piano; but as he played, Jerome watched her slip a packet into the drawer of the hall-table, and come towards him, raising her veil.

He jumped up. "I startled you, I'm afraid?"

"You did, rather."

"I'm sorry." He took both her hands. "What's the matter, Golda?"

"Why should anything be the matter?" She disengaged herself with a light laugh. "It's the scirocco, I suppose."

"Beastly wind! Listen, bambina: Come out to lunch with me, somewhere — Torre di Costantino, anywhere."

"I — I can't." She sank on the couch and drew off her gloves wearily.

"You are worn out. You ought to be looked after. I don't believe that Rezia is fit for anything but acting tragedy-queens."

"She's gone now, for a day or two."

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"Good. Then come a spasso, for a holiday!"

Her eyes closed a moment as if from exhaustion. Jerome pondered, drawing his brows together; full of a vague suspicion which he found unbearable. As she did not move, he strode to the drawer of the hall-table, and took out of its wrappings the small bottle she had secreted there. One glance at its label confirmed his fears; and he thrust it into his own pocket, closing the drawer. He came back with set lips.

Golda's eyes, wide open, stared at him. He realized that she had seen everything; but it did not suit him to bring on a crisis in the midst of that deadly temperature; and he gathered up her gloves for her, and led the way to the door.

They found a botte with its orange sheepskin, and created an artificial coolness by cantering through the almost deserted streets.

The last tourists were leaving as they reached the Tower of Constantine. In the dark passageway, they crossed some Anglo-Romans he knew, who glanced from Jerome to Golda and turned away their British noses. Jerome, who had mechanically raised his hat, flushed a dark

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red. — Beasts! What business had they to create a turbid atmosphere?

“I used to know them,” remarked Golda calmly. “That’s what they can’t forgive. — *Lasciali perdere* — let them go!” She shrugged a slender shoulder and leaned over the parapet, gazing across at the bare caverns of the Palatine.

“It makes me sick,” Jerome began, when he had ordered lunch, and they were sitting at the far end of the terrace; — “here in Rome, these respectable people talk and think like cooks and valets. Why, the Old Guard, with all its license, is as far removed from them as the moon is from the mud! — Have some *salame*. — Poetic dish, eh?”

They ate little; and Jerome leaned back and smoked his cigarette, content to watch the contour of the neck and shoulder opposite, the half-opened lips delicate as the petals of a flower. They were quite alone on the terrace. He leaned across suddenly, and put a hand on hers: —

“Why did you want to kill yourself, Golda?”

Her half-closed eyes behind the spirals of

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smoke, watched the ash grow on her cigarette. "Così," she flicked it off.

"I know," said Jerome at this gesture of sad indifference. "But there's something else?"

"Who knows? It's all so sordid and sad! I've simply got to the end, where there is no turning."

Jerome was silent.

"You've never known my story?" She looked away from him. "I did n't know whether Monty —"

"No! and I don't need to know it. I want to find out simply how I can help you now."

"You are a dear boy!" She hesitated and shook her head. "Nobody can do anything. And nothing really matters, anyhow."

"Ah, I know that creed! But *you* are not a coward!"

"I wonder? You shall judge. — My father was implicated in the last revolution in Poland, before my birth. He advised against the conspiracy; but when it broke out, he refused to give up the names of the conspirators, who were his friends. So they threw him into a dungeon — oh, these are facts! — two feet under water,

where the rats came and gnawed him. Before the date of his execution, the Governor of Poland died. The new Governor set him free. He died soon after, in Paris, broken . . .”

Jerome gave an exclamation of pain.

“My little brother was whipped and imprisoned, for having made in school, in a moment of childish folly, a caricature of the Tsar. He died in prison. . . . Think of it, — even the children! Our estates in Poland were confiscated. I was brought up by my aunt in Paris. One day when she was very ill, the Russian Legation surrounded the house and demanded to search the rooms. There were papers there of importance; for she was in communication with the exiled Polish nobles and bishops, who were my father’s friends. They instigated a search; and as I was only a child and my aunt too ill to speak to them, the frightened servants led them from room to room. The papers were behind a folding panel on the servants’ floor. When they came to that place, my heart was beating so loud, I thought they would hear it. They looked at me before each door was opened; but I managed at this point to look out of the win-

dow; and they simply fumbled in closets and under the beds and went out.

"That night, I wrapped myself in a cloak, slipped out the back way, and took the precious papers to an abbé who was a friend of the family on the other side of Paris. No one ever discovered the letters, which were afterwards destroyed; and the Russian Legation had the pleasure of sealing up for a week every object in the house."

"You little heroine!" muttered Jerome.

"Wait." A line of pain showed in her forehead. "My aunt had many exiles at her house, besides monsignori, Frenchmen of the old régime, literary men. She was very religious; very stern. I was not happy there. When I was seventeen, one of the most brilliant men in France, who frequented the house, saw me, came day after day; talked to me —"

She could get no further, dropping her head in her hands. In an instant, she had turned the gesture into one of wearily pushing back the hair off her forehead.

Jerome looked down. The story was hurting

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him, and his throat was dry as he asked: "You mean, this man —?"

"He took me to Italy with him. In Venice, I realized he had never intended to marry me. I left him. My aunt had disowned me. I fled to Rome. I thought of entering a convent. But I could not bear to renounce my intellectual freedom. I found refuge in a kind Italian family who had known me in the old days; and lodged with them until two years ago, when the mother of Rezia died, and we went away together to live and work. . . . I paid back all the money *he* had given me; but though he wrote letter after letter, imploring me to return, I have never seen him again."

"You poor, poor little girl!"

"Oh, you are good." The tears sprang to her eyes, to be quickly dried up in their fire. "I don't care now. I have freedom. I can play and I can work — alone!"

"Then, why —?"

"I don't know! Those things can't be explained." She got up.

Jerome did not move. "Promise, promise, little Golda, that before you ever do a thing like

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that again, — I mean, buying chloral, — you will fight it out with me!”

“That’s so likely!”

“Promise!” He gripped her hand until it hurt; and to end the tenseness of the moment, she lightly nodded her head. They went out. The glare of the sun hurt their eyes, and the long wall beside them, with its broken bottles, seemed endless, with no mystery or beauty to soften the recital of this tragedy of a woman’s life.

Jerome strode down the hill till he found a carriage, and they drove back in silence to her apartment.

“This is best, after all!” She sighed, and threw herself down on the divan that looked out on the loggia. “Play to me, Jerome!”

Jerome obeyed, gliding from one tender Chopin song to another. She listened with closed eyes; and when he paused, spoke without opening them, as if continuing a conversation —

“And so, I think you had better not come here any more.”

He swung around. “Why not? I haven’t been here for two months.”

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"You saw how those people looked at me."

"What do *I* care how 'those people' look at you!"

"Oh, you are a chivalrous boy, which makes you stay; and you would stay, too, if you were the other kind. As it is, I don't want either to sacrifice the one, or to be sacrificed by the other. — So, good-bye!"

"Golda!" It was a look of boyish pain she could not meet. He had taken the last stab to himself with his usual naïveté: "Of course, I'll not come, if it bores you!"

"Oh, you blessed infant!" She sat up, swinging her feet to the floor. "Go now, at all events: I can't stand much more. And we'll have a gita together, some day soon, surrounded by all the Old Guard!"

XIX

Giù per la mala via
L'anima mia s'en va:
Il senso gli promette
Ogni piacer che ha . . .

SAVONAROLA

FOR ten days Jerome kept away from the loggia on the Spanish Steps, working hard all day, and spending the evenings at the palace of his Roman married friend. She, at least, had known Golda in other days, and still had her to play there. It eased the young man's mind to talk of her to this wise and dispassionate woman of the world. She sympathized entirely with the Polish past of the family; but when Jerome, with glowing eyes, referred to her courage and hopelessness in the present, she shook her head.

"Prudence, prudence, friend Girolamo! It is not safe to interfere in other people's lives; for little good can be done: and often, untold harm . . . Basta!"

The cool tones fell like drops of rain on his fever. He resolved to dismiss the whole subject

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from his mind for the present; and spent the hours when not working in studying the frescoes which are the only lovely things to be found in Roman churches.

Then, late one afternoon, as he lifted the leathern curtain on leaving Santa Maria del Popolo, he saw, in the crowd before a lighted altar, the kneeling figure of Golda. He dropped the curtain and stepped back. She did not see him as she rose to her feet, but Jerome caught sight of a pale face, the lips touched with carmine. He frowned. This was obviously the moment to walk away; and walk away Jerome did, as far as the door. There, with his back turned, he waited as though he could move no farther. She had lighted a candle; he remembered too well to look at her.

"What are you doing, Leigh?" She came up behind him, and used the formal "voi."

He found himself muttering, "May I walk back with you?"

"Yes. We'll go through Villa Borghese." She seemed happy as they passed under the ilexes and stone-pines of the noble Piazza di Siena, growing black against the gold. She

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stooped to pick up a pine-cone: "Look! it's like a bit of beautiful Japanese carving; and I have some little stones, green, blue, that are a joy to touch, to feel —"

"What an epicure!"

"I love wood-things; and the work of men. — Do you hear the trampling of the horses' hoofs in the great fountain up there? Cavalcades are rushing through the woods, hordes of Huns (I'm a descendant of the Huns); Tartars on their fierce little steeds —"

"Barbarian!"

"And epicure? — Well, we Poles are both."

"And what am I, Golda?"

"You? Oh, a mad idealist — who is always asking 'e poi?' You cannot enjoy anything without repeating in the midst of the pleasure — 'and after?'"

A light sprang into Jerome's eyes. "Can't I? Well, I'm an analyst. I want to do things with my eyes open."

"Your eyes are shut, shut, shut!"

She broke from him and leaned over the brim of the dark fountain. The petals of the roses she wore fell into the water. She mur-

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mured, as if to herself, "Why, why do you hurt so? All your roses and lilies!"

"You did not like them?" pleaded Jerome, his boyish face rather grave.

"I loved them. Who but you would think of sending me lilies every day, white roses! —"

"It was a reminder," said Jerome slowly. "You wanted solitude, wanted freedom. Well, — Viva Golda Intangible! — keep those and the lilies always, in your heart."

"Oh, you terrible child, — you want me to go on waving my flag, even when it is down in the mud, broken — trampled on!"

"Yes," said Jerome.

Her eyes filled with tears, and he began quickly, staring down into the dark water beside her: "Listen, bambina: Monty and I are getting up a farewell excursion before we leave for Paris next week —"

Her hand flew to her heart. "You are leaving next week?" She laughed: "Could Duse have done that better?"

"No," said Jerome dully; and continued: "On the first of June, I want to be in Paris. Then, I shall probably go to America, to work

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in New York —” he paused, following his own thoughts.

She took him up with a little backward toss of her head: “So? We are to have a farewell party at the end of May?”

“Yes; you and Rezia — and Aspor, of course, Savelli, Monty, Paolaccio, and that dear old Madame de Lielle who is so fond of you.”

“Nice. Where shall we go?”

“To Frascati and Mondragone. One last splurge, before Monty and I face the ordeal of seeing all our canvases in the Salon. — I feel drained and sad. And I love this place, curse it!”

“I know.” She threw back her head, her eyes half closed under their long lashes. “One lies and listens on one’s terrace to the bells of Rome at night — till one is ready to die of too much love, and too much hate. . . .”

“Complicated barbarian!”

“Simple-hearted Puritan!”

“I’m a Puritan, am I? If only Boston could hear you!”

She shrugged away Boston. “I’m thinking of leaving Italy, myself.”

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"You!" — Why should he feel suddenly so bereft? The place they had come to had taken on some of the gloom and dampness of a prison. The stagnant fountain seemed waiting mournfully.

"Why not? There is nothing for me to do in the summer months; neither lessons nor concerts. And my small earnings are melting away. I am tired of the bitter struggle . . . merely to exist is such a burden —"

"Golda!" His plans were thrown into confusion by this sudden revelation of the anchorless state of her life. He dreaded what she should say next; and held out a hand as if to ward off a shock.

"Don't be alarmed," she smiled rather bitterly. "It's only marriage."

She sat down on the mossy stone seat and folded her hands. Her expression made Jerome break into a discomfited laugh.

"You're joking!"

"Do you consider marriage a joke?"

"Oh, I can make nothing of you to-day —"

"That's unusual!"

"Golda, be serious!"

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"Serious! I'm tragic. Am I not going to marry?"

"And liberty?" cried Jerome wildly;—"and Golda Intangible, and Rome—? You can't leave all this, so lightly? Where—who—?"

"It is that man I told you of, when I was a girl. — He saw me last autumn, in Paris, at the Olympia. I would not look at him. — He has asked me to marry him."

"That rascal!"

"He is one of the most brilliant *littérateurs* in France," she retorted carelessly. "He is forty-five. He can give me everything that heart could wish. He says he has tried to do without me, but he wants me more than anything else."

Jerome sat down, as if thoroughly exhausted. Neither spoke for a long while, watching a pair of lovers wandering down the dim vista beyond the fountain.

Then, — "I suppose you were — wise," he muttered. "You have accepted, I suppose."

"No," said Golda.

The shock of joy startled Jerome: "Oh, Golda — No?"

Then he rose and walked away, furious with

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himself, with her. "Why do you play with me? What is it to me, whether you marry him or not?"

"It's nothing to me, either."

Jerome gnawed his mustache, his back towards her. — Pity for the child finally triumphed. After all, he was an elder brother. He must think of her safety and happiness.

"Forgive me, bambina," he began awkwardly, as she watched him under half-closed lids. "You know, I care what becomes of you, more than for anything in all Europe. Tell me if I can help."

Jerome, who loved to be heroic, to be magnanimous, waited with touching dignity for the woman to fall at his feet. He watched the long slim body bending away from him, the slender fingers under their fall of lace, drawing something in the moss. In the dusk he fancied he saw her shoulders heave, and full of pity, he stretched out a hand and turned her slowly towards him. The blue eyes met his, laughing.

"You are too delicious Leigh. But, before the sky falls, we'll have a last game together at Frascati."

XX

“Due per due,
Quattro per quattro,
Alla stazione
Vogliamo andar . . .”

So sang the Old Guard in the silvery mist of a Roman May morning, as they marched, eight hearts strong, to the Ferrovia.

The catalpa blossoms were falling on the fresh wet streets — purple and yellow with the petals of roses that climb on old walls. Beyond the ugly low buildings rose Monte Cavo floating in a sea of gold. All which things combine to make this station the most happy and sad and loved and hated in all the world.

It was Jerome's last Sunday in Rome. It was an occasion for the Old Guard to celebrate; even as they had celebrated three other events: when Monty's and his pictures were accepted at the Salon, when they were refused by the Belle Arti, and when Savelli's engagement was broken off. They were singularly congenial, in spite of their inharmonious temperaments. All but Golda were socialists and free-thinkers. All but the prince were artists; all but Mme. de Lielle

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were young, — and she had the youngest heart of all. All, moreover, despised fat pompous people, monsignori, and Art Nouveau; shared each other's crusts or dinners at the Excelsior with equal enthusiasm, and kept themselves aloof from the gossiping, scandal-loving salons of Rome. They lived widely different lives. This very night Savelli and the Americans were expected at the reception of a great Roman lady; while Mme. de Lielle was much sought after in the literary world; but they preferred their own celebrations, as being gayer, freer, above all, fresher and cleaner than any they could find elsewhere.

Jerome seated himself beside the humorous old Frenchwoman whom he liked, in the compartment next to that occupied by Savelli and the girl companions. She laid an affectionate hand on his arm.

"Be careful, Jerome. Golda looks — I know not why — like a little flame, to-day."

He pressed the arm in his. "To whom do you say it! When we are gone, madame, you'll look after her, won't you? I'm anxious about her future, too."

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"I know. That man is so powerful! I knew him. I looked up to him from afar, as to one of our great poets. He lived hard. He is not used to being resisted; and, moreover, Golda stimulates him — his brain, his nerves. He needs her. And he knows he can never get her in any other way — now."

"I hate it all," muttered Jerome.

"She should be married, though. It is hard to live as she does. . . . Already people are talking. Some unscrupulous man may take advantage of it, and then she may be forced into a loveless marriage." The old Frenchwoman sighed; and, glancing sideways at the young painter, who was staring moodily out of the window: "You and Monty have been such good friends to her —"

"Yes; but what help is that to her? Monty cares only for paint and pleasure — outside his friends; while I — I may dream — who knows? — of a home in my own land, and children . . . But the kind of woman I want is all but impossible to attain — one, stately and cool and sweet, with deep-hidden founts of tenderness quickly suppressed — beautiful and gracious and wise."

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Mme. de Lielle watched the face beside her change from its glowing tenderness to a shadow of pain; and gave up the fight.

"You are in love, my friend."

"Yes. Eh bien? I shall never get her."

"A married woman?"

"Her husband is dead. No, it is she, herself."

He was silent. Then, looking straight at his questioner: "As long as I live, madame —"

The old Frenchwoman sighed again. She did not drop his arm at once, but looked across him at Golda, who stood in the corridor, her back towards them. Jerome looked, too, a cloud on his brow. The realization that he was leaving Rome, with all its colour and music, its pleasure and pain, had been in the back of his head like a dull ache throughout those last days. He had known that feeling every time he left the marvellous city: even as a boy, he had suffered from nostalgia as only children can.

"Yes," sighed Monty, dropping down in the seat opposite him, with his usual perception of his friend's moods: "It's d—— hard to go! One loves one's own country like one's wife, but Italy like a mistress!"

"Will you be quiet, good-for-nothing! I have a scolding for you!" And as the old Frenchwoman took his friend to task for one of his numerous follies, Jerome continued to stare across at the back of Golda's head, her hands with their quick little gestures under the fall of lace; the filmy transparent tunic of some Persian stuff belted about her; the narrow blue skirt that showed the outline of her lovely boyish limbs.

Always, always he would remember that tawny head against its background of wild, desolate Campagna; always she would wear to him that look of pride, on high-bred little features, mixed with the recklessness of one who scorned all rules not imposed by her own free will.

He did not seek to talk to her. But he wanted to get on the other side of the corridor where he could catch on her red lips the quiver that sometimes came, sending an inexplicable pain through his heart.

He walked heavily across, followed by the eyes of the old Frenchwoman, and paused to stroke the back of Aspor the hound. Under the

silken curly hair, the thin backbone rose sharp and knobby; the skull above the long golden eyes felt like a billiard ball. Rezia, standing beside him, looked sullen; and he could not resist bantering her. Anything, just then, was better than silence with his own thoughts.

"Madonna Lucrezia — may I have the honour of making a giro with you on Mon-dragone?"

"If there's no other living being obtainable, I'd prefer Aspor."

"Aspor never answers back, does he?"

"He is never tiresome."

"Is dumb slavishness your ideal of human conduct?"

"Silent independence, yes."

"Well, you live with Golda."

"That is like being alone with myself. Golda is my friend. Any one who would touch Golda, must first kill Aspor — and me."

"What ferocity! — I wish I were an ancient Roman. I'd buy you for sixty thousand sesterces — to bring me my peplum and lute, and sing me to sleep!"

"I'd throw myself from this train, first!"

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They laughed at the historical combination.

"Yes, I'd kill you," she concluded drowsily, as if to herself.

Jerome laughed. "Poison? Looks? If *words* could kill, I'd have been a corpse, long ago —"

"There are other ways," she muttered.

"And ten years in gallera afterwards! I can't quite see you shut up in a prison cell. . . . You'd starve yourself to death, probably —"

"I'd eat my heart, and spit it out in the gaoler's face!" She laughed with a kind of savage satisfaction; and his own spirit lightened by this exchange of fantastic blows, Jerome turned with the others to leave the train as it slowed up on the sunny platform of Frascati.

The warm fresh morning air received them, a cool little breeze from the mountains succeeded by a warm glow, like piercing steel followed by a rush of blood.

Under the shades of Villa Aldobrandini, it might have been evening; and they flung themselves with a shout of joy on the violet-studded grass, or perched on old walls that hung over the vast sunshine of the Campagna. The breathless stillness, pierced only by the crickets

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and the distant splashing of many fountains, the tender sadness of the old gardens, abandoned paradises, filled them with a deep contented silence. — Italians, when they are together, are often inclined to silence. They are so candidly unselfconscious, following their thoughts or the flight of a bird or a cloud; with never a sense of pressure of either conscience or time.

So the long afternoon wore away: leaving them content, with eyes half closed and smouldering hearts. — Let not the night set free such fires! The Roman night, most magical, most dangerous of potions; which, to have drunk of once, leaves after it nothing but sadness and a thirst that is never quenched.

XXI

— Boccuccia riderella spandifiori. . . .

(Little laughing mouth that's shedding flowers.)

Song of the Marches

JEROME and Golda climbed the hill a little behind the others, their hearts oppressed by the very beauty of the place. The deep gnarled wood that marches, up and up, to that incredibly poetic giant Castle of Mondragone, was dark as night. The dragons that ramp on the moss-stained shields seemed writhing about the trunks of oak and ilex. Now and then the shriek of a peacock rent the evening air. They stopped halfway, and plunged into the freshness of flower-starred grass. Golda, stooping suddenly at the roots of a stone-pine, looked up with all the wonder of a child at Jerome.

"Did you hear that?" He bent close beside her to listen. "It came from the tree."

"Was it a groan?"

"Or a tiny song?"

"It must be a dryad!"

"Look!— it's a lizard!" The little green

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monster whisked out, paused in unearthly stillness, and gazed at them unwinking. The weird sound began again.

"The lizard sings!"

"I never knew it before," frowned Golda.

"Perhaps he never did it before. Perhaps he is a poet!—Oh, Golda, you'd make anything sing!" And, forgetting the lizard, he threw back his head and chanted the old Goliard song:—

"Like a dream our prime is flown,
Prisoned in a study.
Sport and folly are youth's own —
Tender youth and ruddy."

Golda seated herself by the singing tree, and Jerome dropped in the grass at her feet and stared hard at her lips.

"What have you got on them, Golda?"

"My lips? — Oh, stern little boy, what is the matter, now?"

"Nothing. It's —"

"You mean the salve? But every woman uses it! I would n't feel dressed unless I had some on."

"No, I don't like it." He gazed, full of reproach, a little fascinated.

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"It comes off," she murmured absently. "I looked so like a ghost this morning —"

Jerome, with an effort, turned his eyes away. He knew that priggishness on his part would only make her disdainful. He took a man's way.

"Your lips, as they really are — one wants to kiss them. But with that rouge on them, one simply does n't wish to any more." He groaned: "Heaven forgive me!" and struggled with a smile. He saw her rubbing them hard with her tiny handkerchief.

"There! Is that better?" She was pouting out her lips like a child.

Jerome turned his head as if forced by some unseen power.

"No," he said violently. "They look like a geranium petal. They look absolutely like a flame —" He thought that he had, perhaps, better not look any more. Enough of a moral lesson had, perhaps, been inculcated.

She broke into a veiled laugh. "What if the colour were real, after all? Not *everything* you see is painted, O painter-man!"

She twisted her lithe body around so that the long back touched his knee. Her hair was a web

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of gold; the Persian tunic, like a cobweb, veiled the childish breast. He stared down at it, frowning.

"Why do you always scold?" pleaded Golda.

"Because you are so imprudent! You are surrounded by prying people: you are not careful enough. You wear rouge; and those daring lovely clothes — not daring as other women's are — not uncovering you — one sees nothing of you —" He stopped, remembering how he had painted her in the fresco. — How had he ever managed to do it? The thought of it, now, made him turn hot and cold. Either she was a new being — or he, another man. He shook himself furiously. "Let's go on!"

She screwed around and lifted her face to his, the lashes drooping, the lips a little open: "Why are you angry with me, Jerome?"

He stared away from her. "I don't know. Perhaps because you have become so infernally — lovely."

"Is that a crime?"

"Yes, sometimes." He smiled a little grimly.

"Oh, now I like you much better. You don't look like yourself when you frown. Jerome,

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talk to me. Your voice is like music: and when it breaks — one's heart could break with it. . . ."

"Golda!"

"Oh, when you draw down your brows like that — portentous! — no one, not even the lizard, would venture forth. Are you not enjoying yourself?"

"I don't know."

She put up two slender hands and drew his face down towards her. She glanced aside; and swiftly, absently, brushed his lips with hers.

The cool, flower-like touch stung him intolerably. She had scarcely seemed to notice that she was doing it; and her kiss left a barb of faintly poisonous delight, maddening him.

He caught her head roughly in his two hands, and stared down at her: —

"Golda, Golda, stop that!"

"Stop what?"

"That — those —"

"Puritan!"

"I am, am I? And you — Where is Golda the Intangible now, oh, where is she?"

"It is always like this! 'And then?' . . . you

ask. Can't you just enjoy a passing moment, that never can come again? Can't you live, for once?"

"Can you?"

"Oh! there will never be anything more for *me*. The man who is going to marry me said that it must be on one condition: that I never give anything to another man —"

Jerome struck his clenched hand on his knee, and ground through his teeth: "Keep your kisses, if you wish, but, by Heaven, I will stand no such reason as that!"

His arms sprang about her; but she slipped through them like a mermaid; and was off among the tree-boles, calling back mockingly:—

"Follow the will-o'-the-wisp, Sir Galahad!"

He strode wrathfully behind her through the grove until they suddenly emerged on the vast terrace which overhangs the Roman Campagna.

The others were gathered near the balustrade, watching the sinking sun. The dragon-fountain rose very close to the clouds. Huge tragic masks, crowning the summit of vast pillars, grinned widely at space. Far below,

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gigantic cypresses stood in serried ranks against the gold.

Jerome leaned over the parapet, gazing across the plain, his eyes blurred with longing. All this Roman land, unutterably dear and sad and unchanging, he was leaving perhaps for ever. How terrific its power, how he needed it! — its vast solitudes, its magniloquent silences, — squalid splendours of an eternal city. . . . His highly trained youth, his ardent manhood, converged in a passion which engulfed Golda and Art and History in one vast impersonal abyss of sadness.

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When he turned away, he saw Rezia's eyes fixed on him, as she stood behind Golda, her hand on the collar of her wolfhound. A sullen enmity faced him. In the western radiance, Jerome felt himself suddenly cold. What cause had she to hate him so? He walked back behind the others. Golda did not come near him again.

Alone among the ilexes, he found himself impatiently again considering her lips. What a premonition of hidden sweetness and passion!

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How little she seemed to care whether they had touched his own, or not — (O donna troppo esperta! — Remember Saint Thomas's advice, to commend all women to God. . . .)

He thought of that as he came with the others into the dark little church on the piazza. Vespers were ending; and before the altar which dimly lighted the gloom, Jerome knelt beside Golda, watching her averted cheek. She did not seem to know he was there. She did not seem to pray. She looked like a little child, with bright eyes fixed on the candles. A dark desire to bring her thoughts down to him made Jerome come nearer.

"Golda!" he whispered; "Golda!"

She heard, but did not turn.

"This is our last day together. Are you glad?"

There was no answer. The singing drowned his voice.

"We may never, after to-morrow, see each other again." — This was the truth, though he did not know it.

She merely shrugged her shoulders.

Then he bent his head, and almost voicelessly

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hissed the words of love: "Ti amo!" There was a singing in his ears; a fear, as of a profanation. His words had sounded more like hate than love.

The red lips quivered, parted, as though they had been struck. Jerome felt her eyes on him, singling him out of the crowd, as though they two stood alone in a dim nuptial chamber. The revelation of her heart, there before the altar, struck him dumb with wonderment and fear: a fear of the unknown looming passion of desire and fulfilment.

They came out into the sunlit square. Golda went and leaned on Rezia's arm. Jerome stayed with the men.

XXII

— Et toute la nuit les rossignols chantaient.

DOMINIQUE \

At sunset, they all came down, a chanting band, to the little station of Frascati.

Golda sat on the parapet with the others, swinging her feet. An exuberant spirit had scrawled on the wall below, "Evviva, il Sociasmo" (sic), and they applauded the sentiment with fervour. Then Golda announced calmly:—

"Listen, children! I'm not going to any Duchess's this evening; so why should I go home now? There is another train in an hour. Do you want to go back to that crowded city, Rezia?"

Rezia shook her head.

"Then we stay!"

"We'll stay, too," announced Monty, with his arm on Jerome's shoulder.

The others shrugged and left them, Savelli calling back: "Monday night at your place as usual, Golda?"

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“Sicuro, surely!”

Before they could reach the platform, Monty suddenly exclaimed: “By Jove, I forgot all about my aunt! I promised to take her to the Duchess’s. The old lady would never forgive me. Beastly shame!” He ran down towards the platform, waving his hand, followed by the jeers of Rezia and Jerome.

Golda had not moved. The air was golden, cool, exhilarating as wine. The faint splashing of fountains, the laughter and songs of the people on the piazza, sounded far away. Here, in the bright glare, by a station platform, Jerome felt the magic of the land as no music or moonlight had ever made him feel it. It tingled in his blood, with his very youth, in a sense of unknown wonders to be revealed. He tried not to look at Golda beside him, swinging a dusty long-pointed shoe; her sensitive pale Slavic face brooding, mysterious as the moon, transparent as a child.

He tried to still the throbbing in his veins by whistling, by buying blood-oranges (into which she plunged her little teeth quite hungrily, forgetting his existence), by caressing the hound

Aspor, who came back from a stroll with Rezia, licking his chops. Jerome's hand on his head made him growl.

"Let be, he's a one-man dog," snapped Rezia.

"A beauty. What does his name mean?"

"It's Russian for 'a winner in dispute.' He's a Gustopsovoy Borzoi, from the Woronzova kennels."

"A rare dog!"

Rezia forgot her antipathy in enthusiasm for the wraith-like animal. — "He's a hound of premier rank and ancient type, hare-footed, long-tailed, maize-coloured; a little bent in the stifles, perhaps: otherwise without a peer. He was trained for coursing, sight-hunting; but, of course, he's had nothing of that for years. — Have you, poor old *piripicchio mio*!"

Aspor laid his ears back on his neck till the tips crossed; and his yellow unblinking eyes gazed at Jerome. It made the painter restless, and he roused himself to glance down the line. A strident whistle tore the air.

"There's our train," sighed Golda, speaking for the first time. "Fi-fi, ni-ni, fini!"

They rose mechanically and came down to the ticket-office. The train swept into the station, heading, not for Rome, but for the open Campagna.

Jerome looked up blankly, and met Golda's eyes. The fire leapt back in them: the moon was no longer dead.

"Shall we?" she whispered.

"Pronti — partenza!" came the call down the platform.

The panting train left no time for reflection. They swung themselves into an empty compartment, and sank laughing on the cushions. Aspor had bounded in. They were saved — or lost.

"And the tickets?" said Rezia.

A guard put in his head. Jerome whirled round, spreading empty hands, "You must give us tickets, friend."

An indulgent smile: "Where to?"

"Ah," Jerome's smile responded, "you must help us there, too. Wherever you wish!"

"It goes till midnight," pondered the guard, gazing at Jerome's banknote; "then you must change."

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"Oh, we won't want to change!" Jerome interposed. "Tell me some of the places you go to."

The guard let out a string of names, beautiful names, old in art and chronicles.

"Oh, any of those would do! Tell me where we would be — let us say, at eight or thereabouts, in time for dinner?"

This having been ascertained, Aspor paid for, and some American cigars tucked into an Italian tunic, they found themselves staring out at violet hills and the long aqueducts vanishing behind them. Golda, a cigarette between her lips, had lost her listlessness. She pointed out a solitary tower she wished to live in for the rest of her days; she caressed Aspor, and teased Rezia, and talked to Jerome with charming candour. She treated it all as a pleasure-party got up for her benefit which she would gratefully enjoy; and the velvet night came down on the velvet hills and shut them out from the world.

They stopped at last at the foot of a rugged mountain, descended as in a dream, and were directed to a landing by the rippling waters of a lake. Boatmen hailed them; and they were

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soon gliding through the blackness, a lantern in the bow. Aspor stood erect and spectre-like beside it. The lake seemed a sombre jewel set in the iron crown of grim hills. An old bearded man sat huddled in the middle of the boat, his gnarled arms pulling stiffly towards the opposite shore. They landed apparently in woods, cool and mystery-haunted after the heat of the day. Rezia declared she would like this place, if only others had not discovered it.

No others were in the little dining-room of the osteria as they passed through it on their way to the terrace bordered with orange trees. Tables were set there; and their host brought out quickly a dish of nuts and oranges, with prosciuto and salame, a huge hunk of black bread, and some vino del paese.

They seated themselves merrily; for it was late and they were very hungry. The nightingales were singing far down in the dusky woods where the rose of evening had grown dim; and a golden moon sailed sadly over the cypresses. Somewhere in the darkness a fountain was falling with a silver sound.

Fons sonat, adclama, murmure dicit: Ama.

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The words on Golda's lips were low and musical as the fountain. . . . All Jerome's restlessness vanished. He leaned across the table cracking nuts in his strong brown hands for Rezia, feeling through his downcast lids a kind of blinding light beating upon him.

Rezia talked on, in her bitter, sardonic way; the other two listened, their eyes ever meeting, overwhelmingly conscious of each other, of the music of the night around them. A bower of roses behind them was breathing out waves of perfume. Petals of roses dropped noiselessly from a vine of Maria-Enrichettas above them, the colour of watered wine. A faint smell, strangely familiar, yet remote, reached Jerome, who turned to peer into the darkness as if a hand had suddenly been placed on his shoulder.

"Is it jasmine?" he muttered. "How terribly sweet it is! Or passion-flower? — No; not that."

"Passion-flowers have no smell," said Rezia dryly. "That's why they are given that name: dried-out, paper-flimsy, dull-crackling passion-flowers!" She pronounced the word with infinite scorn.

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"You may know all about passion-flowers," growled Jerome, cracking a walnut, "but you know nothing whatever about passion. That is the word they gave to the greatest agony of mankind. It's called in German 'Leidenschaft,' the power of suffering. It's the fulness of life; youth triumphant, death conquered. . . ."

Golda's eyes looked up, met his, and turned away.

Rezia's lips were bitter. "Words, words!" she muttered.

"They are my capital!" agreed Jerome lightly. "They're all I have to spend. But I'm rich there. My coins are not always current: Spanish doubloons, Venetian ducats, rose-nobles of England, get mixed in amongst them; are refused on the street — but, they're all gold!"

"Oh! I can't buy you out in that! — Golda, have you finished? Let's get away from this."

Jerome went into the hotel, engaged and paid for two rooms for the signore; and told the proprietor that he himself would go on to Subiaco that night, walking around the lake and catching the train farther on.

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Then he coolly lit a cigarette and strolled out on the terrace again. The blood was leaping in his veins; but he felt curiously content, drugged, asleep. The long day in the sun and hills, the single cup of volcanic wine, had sent his youth singing to the heights. He felt no fear of the future; nothing but a kind of desperate elation. The score was not to be settled till later.

The long, narrow terrace was empty. He came to the edge, where the little wood began; and he thought he saw a dim form through the starry vines of the arbour. As he entered the bower, warm and dark, a light figure passed him like a ghost. He followed, only to lose her again.

The chase elated him. He threw away his cigarette, strode down the narrow path, passed the fountain singing in the moonlight; and caught her just where the cypresses ended in a gateway of white sky.

As his hands touched her, he heard a deep growl: and Aspor's ghostly shape rose bristling between them.

Jerome took a step forward, the dog retreating; and presently, he caught sight of Rezia leaning against a tree, her back towards him.

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"Is that you?" she said coolly. "Why did you steal up like a thief? Aspor might attack you. — I'm deadly sleepy. Are you coming in soon, Golda?"

"In a minute," a voice came out of the darkness.

Jerome went on carelessly: "I've engaged rooms for you at the osteria for to-night. I'm sleeping at Subiaco. — There's a Benedictine Father there I rather love, who has written me to stay if ever I wanted a rest. But I may come over to see how you are, to-morrow, if you don't leave till sunset?"

"We won't leave till sunset," Golda's voice echoed.

"But we'll be back for the Old Guard in the evening," said Rezia with a tinge of peremptoriness in her manner.

"Tiranka!" laughed Golda. "I'll walk a little way with you, Jerome."

Rezia moved slowly away with the dog; and both the man and the little Pole stared after her from opposite sides of the path, across the stone bench in the recess.

Neither stirred. She saw the moonlight on

his waving hair; the rest of him was in darkness. Her own eyes, young and sad, were wells of shadow under the wistful brows, and there were little shadows under the cheek-bones that accentuated her Slavic face. She stood motionless, making no gesture to call him.

“Golda, Golda, Golda!” whispered the man in tones vibrating and tender, his hands stretched out towards her.

“Sì, amore?”

“What is it, this pain? Why, why are you so sad also? What will become of us? I must go, now, you know, — in a few moments. Tell me you know that I must go!”

He took a step almost violently towards her; and at that moment a harsh cry rang through the darkness: “Ou-la-lou!” It was a cry such as Jerome had heard across the Russian steppes when a wolf was sighted; and it was followed, like a pistol-shot, by a dark mass leaping against the sky. Before he could step back the hound had hurled itself against him, bearing him to the ground.

He felt the hot panting breath, the great jaws snapping right and left like a steel-trap, as

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they tried to sink in his throat. Then was the wild beast let loose in Jerome also. He caught the animal in a grip like a vice, above the collar; and shook him until he felt the form sink limply at his feet. Then he lifted the body and heaved it over the precipice, into the lake below. His coat was in tatters. There was blood and saliva on his hands.

He took out his handkerchief, with an exclamation of disgust, and carefully wiped his fingers. Golda had crept up shuddering —

“Are you hurt, my friend?”

“Bah!” he growled. “It’s all Rezia’s doing, the melodramatic minx! Well, I’ve killed her dog. She would kill *me* — if she could.”

“Look at me,” whispered Golda.

Stillness reigned again about them, broken only by the nightingales and the tinkling of the fountain. But both knew that peace was gone. Jerome, still panting from the struggle, from rage at the cowardly attack, strode towards the girl and caught her raised hands in his. He held her fiercely, his lips just above hers, his eyes staring down at her face which was blinded with tears. Then he felt the resisting arms give way,

and his mouth fell on hers. — He himself seemed falling, falling through depths of rose-lit clouds, fragrant, fresh, poignantly sweet, opening to draw him into Paradise.

He wrenched himself away with something like a sob; and, with bent head, stared into the blackness of the woods. — If this were pleasure, then hell must be a place of ease.

“I must go — must go!” he kept repeating, weakening. “For your sake, Golda! — Golda, you are not safe with me; do you understand?”

He raised his head in fear. A rushing sound moved in the high cypresses. It was only the wind; but again that strange fragrance crept about him as from some hidden garden; and, in a flash, the name of it came back to him, even as he caught sight in the waving branches of a dim white signal.

“It is the acacia-tree!” he muttered; “so white and faint and far!”

His arms fell at his sides, and he strained a moment, listening. The nightingales were throbbing through the night. Golda had sunk upon the stone seat, listening, too.

"What is it, Jerome?"

He came and knelt beside her. "It is — that I must leave you," he murmured, his head against her breast. "It is — that I must not take your dear, divine gift. I am hungry, I am desperate, Heaven knows! — but I can't quite do that. Golda, if only I could hear them once, — those words that I have never heard! Just once before I go! —"

"What words, mio mio amore?"

"The three words, — *you* know!"

"Oh, little boy, you want words, when you are holding my naked heart? —"

"Yes," whispered Jerome; and closed his eyes.

She bent over him, and with her lips against his: — "I love — *you*," she murmured.

"Oh," cried Jerome, "those words! — Who but you could have said them like that? If I did, I should put it, '*I* love!' . . . with the splendour all in my own feeling. But you, — oh, wonderful little love, good-bye! I shall never see your like again!"

His voice died away; and with a wrench of all his senses, he backed from her, turned, and

stumbled down through the forest. He seemed to hear faint voices calling; but, in his heart, he knew that she had not moved. He had turned from her, and she would never follow. He must get it over with, as soon as possible.

He groped his way, torn by brambles, whipped by snapping branches, down the steep side of the mountain. After what seemed hours of blind fighting, he stumbled on a mossy slope on the banks of the lake, sank on it, with his head buried in his arms, and at last slept, drugged, exhausted; as only great emotions exhaust a man, whom thought and sluggish feeling keep wide awake.

XXIII

Ma chillo tempo, come prieto è passato —
Darrìa lo sangue pe farelo tornà . . .

RASSELLA

His dreams merged in a magical reality, when his eyes opened on the east. The air, unimaginably pure and cool, seemed filled with hidden flame. Little flakes of fire in a dip of the hills floated on a glowing bed of roses; the morning star hung opposite, unearthly, luminous.

He roused himself, stiff and drenched with dew, and looked at his tattered sleeve. The past flashed over him like a nightmare. . . . Out of the shadows crept bats and newts and crawling things, with the stirring of strange night-birds. Goblins grinned at him from the boles of trees; a snouted beast scampered into a hole in the ground. — The cacodæmons of Saint Anthony, he reflected half humourously, were tormenting him also. His head and his hands burned with fever.

Only the vision of the Woman was lacking, that lure of the foul fiend, subtle, maleficent,

expert; the net in which to catch unwary sinners. — Where was she?

Out of this mediæval nightmare emerged a radiant boy-face, crowned with a cluster of curls like a young Narcissus. His bronze limbs in sheepskin and rawhide sandals, and the little girl following, bearing on her head a top-heavy basket of flowers, did not dispel the illusion.

Jerome met the faun-eyes fixed on him: "Are you going to sacrifice to the deities of this place?"

"Sissignore," replied the boy politely. "One goes to early Mass and then to sell the flowers in the paese." His cheeks glowed in the growing light, and his white teeth flashed. "Vuole, signore?"

"Magari!" Jerome felt in his pockets. They were empty. He reflected a moment. He had certainly had a handful of silver when he started. Had they been rifled in the night without his knowledge?

He remembered a side-pocket where he kept two small gold-pieces for emergencies. They were safe. He held up one. The brown eyes gleamed. The little girl emptied the basket of

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roses at his feet; and, still staring over their shoulders at the gold-scatterer in tattered raiment, they moved away.

"Oh, blessed Greek children!" muttered Jerome; and he plunged his hot face into the fragrant flowers, wet with the dew and thorny. Then he dragged himself to the edge of the lake, threw off his clothes and plunged in, swimming like a happy animal, and lying out on the pine-needles to dry. He dressed slowly, watching the wonder of the dawn.

He made up his mind to leave, as soon as he had seen the sun touch the water, sucking up the mists and putting to flight the demons in the blue wood-shadows, who lay in wait for him. Then he would make his way to the convent.

And as he waited, lying out on a ledge that projected into the lake, he heard a rustle in the undergrowth: and out of the wood came a slim figure wrapped in a black cloak lined with green, such as the herdsmen wear in the Campagna.

The splendid folds around the slight limbs, the short golden hair like a helmet about her

head, made her seem more than ever like a boy; or like Diana the runner, the huntress, come to bathe unseen.

She stood in haughty inaction, her chin raised listening; then slowly opened the great folds of the cloak. Against that background her lithe body stood sharp and clear as ivory; the head was touched by the gold of the rising sun; and all the lake flushed into sudden radiance.

She stepped to the edge of the water, and entering, her eyes encountered Jerome's. He lay still as the rock, and as grey; flat as a faun, propping his chin on his palms, sunning himself. She seemed neither surprised nor startled. Her lips half opened; and with a sigh, she dropped the cloak and stepped deeper into the glowing water.

Jerome dragged himself to his knees, leaned far out, and tearing the roses from their stems, flung them in passionate handfuls into the lake.

She waded farther and farther in, while the red and white petals clustered about her, till they could hardly be told apart from her.

When all the lake was on fire with the dawn, and only her face floated amongst the blossoms,

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Jerome crawled backwards over the decapitated stems, and plunged into the woods again.

He walked straight ahead for hours; trying, he told himself, to find the railroad station. The world was a howling wilderness. He met no one, and lost his way.

At dusk a herdsman found him almost unconscious from hunger and exhaustion, and shared with him his bread-and-cheese and goat's-milk. He saw the look distraught in the young man's face, shook his head compassionately, and would accept no payment.

From this man he learned the direction of the station. The last train to Subiaco would not pass for another hour.—Was there no carriage that could take him? A carretino started early the next morning.

Devoured by restlessness, he asked the way to the osteria where he had left Golda: and discovered it was but half a mile up the hill. He had been walking in circles since morning.

He started up, leaning on a staff his new friend had given him. He struggled to remember what had happened that morning. Was Golda drowned and at peace now? . . .

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Peace, peace! His fever-racked body longed for the austere little cells of Saint Benedict, the tender Sacro Speco, the fastnesses of the hermits in the gorge.

He found it hard to concentrate his mind; but he recognized in the moonlight the bearded face of the old fisherman who had rowed them over the night before; and he told him to be in readiness to take him back in time to meet the train for Subiaco.

He dragged his body, heavy as lead, along the highway. Halfway up, a little door in the bottle-crowned wall stood open. He saw the square of moonlight breaking the long shadow; and made up his mind with difficulty to pass it. An iron hand on his shoulder was holding him back. Death was lurking for him in that hole in the wall.

Where had he got these sickly notions? He pulled himself together, came abreast of the door and saw a shadow move. He threw up his arm and felt something sting him under the sleeve.

His brain grew clear at the touch of reality, and he grappled with the shadow, pulled away

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a heavy black cloak, and met in the moonlight the gleaming eyes of Rezia.

Jerome laughed, gripping her wrist. Then he disengaged the knife, and tossing it over the wall said wearily, "More melodrama!"

Rezia, draped in the cloak, regarded him sullenly. "Well?" she muttered, "You can send me in gallera, if you choose!"

"Who wants to send you in gallera? What made you do it? Do you think I look too happy?"

"You killed Aspor!"

Jerome laughed. "I'm sorry if I was rude. One of us had to be removed."

"Don't you know a Borzoi never kills? He would simply have knocked you down and held you, as they are trained to hold the wolf, till the huntsman comes —"

"He was out for blood! Now, go to your room and wash your silly hands and face. — And send Golda to me."

"Golda!" she exclaimed disdainfully.

Jerome gave her a sharp look: "Well? What of her?"

"She's not here." Her obstinacy exasperated

the man, and she enjoyed it until he started to go; then, with sudden bitterness: "Oh, yes; she's waiting for you. — E tutto è una frasca! — everything's a farce!"

He watched her stride away, and dragged himself to the end of the terrace, sinking down exhausted by the fountain. His arm throbbed intolerably. He dropped it into the water, and, chin in hand, leaned away, brooding.

"Gesùmmaria!" exclaimed a voice behind him. The proprietor, lantern in hand, stood staring at the fountain, whose water had turned dark. "They have assassinated you, signore!"

"No — Simply made a mess everywhere." He waved him off wearily: "Red in the lake; red in the fountain. Bring me pen and paper."

When his arm had been roughly dressed, he scrawled an incoherent note, asking Monty to look him up at Santa Scolastica; and in case he were too ill to leave, to sell anything he could lay hands on and see that Golda and Rezia got away safely to Venice or somewhere. — His pen was wandering all over the paper. He called the proprietor and told him to see that the two signore left by the early evening train to Rome;

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and most particularly, to tell them that he had been hurt by a fall in the mountains, and had had to reach Subiaco before the convent closed at nine that night.

At the bottom of the hill, the old fisherman sat impassive in a boat, waiting. Jerome dropped listlessly in the first seat he came to, and they cast loose. In rounding the little promontory, the painter stared out at the rock from which he had seen Golda bathing that morning. It seemed a century ago, when both were young. In the darkness, he made out a form on the rock standing on the edge, as the boat passed. He did not need to see the dim face.

“Perchè?” came her breaking voice: “Why?”

Jerome gave the signal to row on; and as the distance widened between them, he crept to the stern, and leaned far over, his arms outstretched to the vanishing figure on the shore. Through the blackness of shadows and waters, he felt, rather than saw, her answering gesture, as they were torn apart.

XXIV

That holy man and I were one
Beyond the bounds that words can trace.
The very flowers were still as we.
I heard the lark that hung in space,
And peace eternal flashed on me.

The Court of Dreams. (Chinese)

JEROME in Santa Scolastica, in the cloistered stillness of white walls, drifted unquestioning out of the welter of dreams, knowing nothing of how he had attained that haven. A tender old Benedictine scholar received him; saw him through his ravings, kept him from knowing anything of the outside world. Don Ambrogio had indeed expected the young painter, having many times in other years accompanied him on pilgrimages to the Sacro Speco. But if he was amazed at the wrecked body and soul committed to his care on that night of May, he kept it to himself. He saw that here was more than a chill followed by fever, a malaria caught on a night passed in the Campagna. Jerome's ravings were concerned with a girl who hung over him with a knife; with

Borzoi that he had had to strangle; with a picture that obsessed him, which he was obliged to paint. Out of the nightmare came no name to give a clue to the watching monk. A frightful anxiety seemed to be tearing the boy to pieces. He would start up exclaiming that he must get to Paris at once; that he would be too late, if he waited. It was with difficulty that they managed to quiet him.

Monty arrived on the fourth day, very frightened at finding his friend so exhausted and still. The fever had left him clear-headed, although anything but peaceful. The good Monty threw over his Paris plans, and prepared to stay by Jerome until he recovered: a decision which drove the young painter nearly distracted. He wanted to send his friend as an ambassador to Mrs. Osborne, to explain his delay; he wanted to get up and start at once. When at last the first of June came and went, bringing him no nearer to recovery, he resigned himself to a week of waiting; and tried to drag from the unwilling Monty an account of the events following the night with Golda.

It appeared that the girls had gone straight

back to their apartment on that Monday, in order to receive their friends as usual at ten. Monty had met them at the station, dubious as to Golda's fate, and hardly reassured by their white faces. They told him that Jerome had gone the night before, to Subiaco. Monty, frankly sceptical, hurried them off to the Spanish Steps where they spent a feverish evening of gaiety, meeting unconcernedly the badinage of their crowd, and vouchsafing no explanation whatever.

Rumours of the sudden flight to the mountains had preceded them, however; and it was only human nature to believe in the worst. — Jerome listened, with white knuckles clenched on the counterpane. He could see that even Monty was but half convinced by the dry statement of facts offered him; and fear for Golda drove all other concerns out of his head. He pressed his friend for details, feeling that something was being kept back from him.

Reluctantly, towards the second week, Monty admitted that something *had* happened. Neither Golda nor Rezia had shown themselves outside the apartment for three days; nor had

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they admitted any of their friends. When Monty last went up to inquire, he saw a strange man standing on the steps, staring gloomily down at him. He had never laid eyes on him before; but he knew. . . .

Jerome sat up violently and gripped his shoulder; Monty, looking away, answered the unspoken question, Yes, he supposed it was *that* Frenchman. He had the well-known pointed beard, the full lips, the tired ironic eyes that went with his ultra-modern plays and poetry. He had not ceased writing to Golda: the fact of the quick-recurring letters lately had been admitted by Golda herself, who had confided in Monty through all the previous trouble. But now the Frenchman was not received.

Jerome lay back and closed his eyes. He was breathing hard, and Monty thought he had had enough for the present, and tried to slip away. But the other's eyes opened suddenly, with such imploration in them that he sank down again and nervously lit a cigarette.

"Go on, I'm all right," said Jerome tensely.

"The man went to Madame de Lielle," continued Monty, staring out of the window and

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blowing out thick rings of smoke as if to obscure the view. "From her, he went to the osteria in the mountains where you — where Golda spent the night. He questioned the proprietor, the boatman; even a shepherd he met. They all confirmed Mme. de Lielle's story; and he returned to haunt Golda's house, unable to get a word with her.

"She gave out that she was ill. None of us saw her for a week. When I returned with the news that you were out of danger, she opened her doors for the first time. Not many people came. Rezia was savage and pale, and finally she admitted the Frenchman alone into the loggia where Golda lay on the divan. I don't know what harrowing scene they had to go through. I heard only, next day, that the man had gone back to Paris. — But Golda has also left Rome."

Jerome pulled himself up again and demanded: "Where? When? She must not be left alone. She is not safe alone!"

"Perhaps she is not alone," said Monty.

They had to hold Jerome down on the bed.

After a little the fever abated, and Monty

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brought the news that Golda and Rezia were together in Geneva, with Polish friends. Mme. de Lielle had heard from her.

Jerome, still frantic, demanded to know if she were safe.

"Safe? What do you mean? He has married her."

"Oh, poor, poor little girl!" Jerome broke into desperate dry sobs; and Don Ambrogio appearing, cleared the room, and administered a sedative to his patient.

As a great concession, Mme. de Lielle was, a few days later, admitted to see him, as he sat, very weak, on a sunny seat in the cloister. The early June sun was beginning to colour his white cheeks. The old woman patted his hand tenderly, and with infinite patience answered all his questions about the little Pole.

— Yes, the Frenchman had declared that he was satisfied, that he knew everything, and that he wished to marry her. It appeared that Golda in those first weeks had refused to consider this, saying that she could not marry — she cared for some one else. . . . Mme. de Lielle gazed away at this point, from the

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tormented face staring at her. Then Jerome, shading his eyes with his hand, muttered: "Go on."

The old Frenchwoman gently continued: "At last, in Switzerland, he joined her again, where she was resting with some Polish friends after her illness —"

"Illness?"

"Yes. You had not heard? But she is now almost well again. The man offered her a home and wealth and fame, and a devotion that has become passionate . . ."

"It is well," and Jerome sadly smiled and thanked his old friend, and asked to be taken back to his cell.

After that, he would see no one but Don Ambrogio, and read the "Imitation," and mused for hours over the grotto frescoes; so gentle and still that Monty became alarmed. The painter roamed restlessly about the place, eyeing his patient with strong disfavour as he conversed earnestly apart with the old monk. Wild surmises as to Jerome's ending his life a holy man traversed the small worldly brain of Monty, who saw in the event a natural reaction

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from the passionate realism of his recent awakening to something besides art. Paris, he felt, was the one means of escape; and he bent all his energies to devising a scheme whereby Jerome should be got there.

Fate helped him through an announcement in the Paris "Herald" which broke like a small bomb in the cloistered place. It was only a line, giving, among the list of arrivals at the Ritz, the names of Mrs. Lawrence Osborne and her daughter Muriel. He put the paper on Jerome's tray and awaited consequences.

A flushed and peremptory young man greeted him an hour later, suitcase in hand, his hair and mustache neatly trimmed.—This rapid recovery from a monastic vocation somewhat alarmed Monty, who feared the long journey to Paris would leave a more serious case than ever on his hands. But Jerome was no longer amenable to discipline. With promises of a picture for their refectory, and a touching farewell from the brotherhood who had grown to love him, Jerome sprang into the waiting carriage and they were driven rapidly away.

Mollycoddling, Jerome decreed, was now to

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come to an end. He would not listen to Monty's plea to break the journey, but tore through Rome with eyes and lips closed; and never rested until he sank into the Paris Express. Monty, shaking his head over the probable result, followed his mad patient like the ideal friend he was, without betraying the fear and curiosity which were frankly driving him distracted.

PART III

A PURITAN IN PARIS

Le véritable pardon ne peut venir que de la partie divine de nous-mêmes. Tout autre pardon ne saurait qu'avilir.

HENRY BORDEAUX

PART III

A PURITAN IN PARIS

XV

Giardini chiusi, appena intraveduti,
O contemplati a lungo pe' cancelli . . .

Hortus Conclusus

THE nightmare journey was over. Jerome snuffed up the breath of wet asphalt, sun-warmed, as his taxi glided down the smooth boulevards and up the Champs-Élysées.

The sight of the big-leaved chestnut trees brought back with a leap his childhood days: the rides in the voitures des chèvres and on the chevaux-de-bois where the macaroons taste like pasteboard; the vermouth-hoarse cry of Guignol; the sails in the Tuileries Gardens.

He loved it and dreaded it; and ever since his arrival at sunrise, he had roamed by himself about the grim Conciergerie and up among the gargoyles of Notre-Dame. Again, he confided his sorrows to the Devil of Paris and saw his derisive mockery of all sorrow. Then, when a decent hour had arrived, he drove to a certain

apartment in the Quartier de l'Étoile, and sent up his card.

Madame Osborne was not receiving.

He sat in the fiacre, tugging his mustache; and then drove off to look up a friend at one of the embassies.

He had left her his address and telephone number, and he refused to dine out; waiting feverishly all the evening at his hotel for a message that never came. The next day, he was ill, but obstinately refused to stay in bed as Monty wished; and at half-past five o'clock, he drove again to the apartment on the Champs-Élysées, where he dismissed his cab.

Madame was not at home.

Jerome walked around the corner, paused and looked up at her high balcony outlined against the radiant sky. It was the moment of pause in the mighty heart-beat of Paris, between systole and diastole, between the retour des courses and the stream of evening pleasure-seekers. Far and cool and golden beyond her balcony shone the sky that had smiled on emperor, king, and commune; on the agony of Alfred de Musset and the triumph of Hugo and

the revelry of Villon. How he loved it all! It was impossible she should not come to him there, where golden youth and genius and pleasure called and would not be denied! He evoked to his aid the magic of the great Enchantress, Paris; and it was with no surprise or discomposure that he saw a white figure emerge on the balcony and pause to gaze downward as a queen might on her people. — What had he done to lose her? No romantic geste of knight or singer had been as hard as his uprooting of the fibres of pleasure, moved by the strange fragrance wafted from a hidden garden.

“Oh, my Garden Enclosed!” murmured Jerome, swept by nostalgic dreams of boyhood, as an old far-away organ of Barbary ground out the “Czarine” to his thoughts — “Lily among briars, white garden whose key is lost! Has a lifetime of aspiration brought me to this barrier, where I can only stand and gaze? — Lady of Mercy, you would let me enter, if you had not yourself lost the key. You will never find it without me!”

The white figure glided in again, as though to shut out the voice beating at her walls. Jerome

walked on for hours, dimly conscious of the throbbing life around him, the shrieking electric signs, vague forms brushing by him, the gaunt hunger of the streets. He never remembered how he got through the next few days. Monty flung up his hands in despair.

On Sunday morning he was strolling in the Cercle des Pannés, en froc, a gardenia in his button-hole (for Jerome the painter, suffering from unhappy love, was still the envy of Parisian dandies) — when he was tapped on the shoulder by his friend of the embassy. — Would he come to the Island that afternoon for tea? De Savignac, his parrain, would call for him at his hôtel and drive him up on his brrrake. Such an occasion for meeting the loveliest women in Paris, he added, was not to be lost. His chief would be there, and la belle Madame Osborne —

Mr. Leigh drew his brows together in profound meditation as to whether sundry important engagements of his that afternoon might be thrown over on so frivolous a pretext? — and decided that they might.

“Good!” signified his friend and trotted off.

So, at four o'clock of a heavenly afternoon of June, this pilgrim of love sat aloft on a shining brake behind four shining bays and was bowled through the Bois, and up the shimmering Avenue des Acacias, to Puteaux.

His godfather on the box eyed him with distinct favour. He himself, brown as a berry, with white imperial and keen blue eyes, made a striking figure. The Prince de Savignac was married to a Bostonian, a distant connection of Jerome's; and though they had been his closest friends in boyhood, Jerome, as usual, made no explanation or excuse when his godfather discovered him at his hotel. With barely a word about a recent illness, he gave himself up now to the pleasure of being with him again.

The two understood each other very well. The prince was pleased with the boy's success both in the world of art and in *the* world. He had heard of him only through others, but what he knew of the Roman incident did not discompose him. He would pick out a nice young girl for him, and the boy would soon ranger himself. Jerome had really the makings of a first-class husband in him.

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Unconscious of these benevolent projects, the young man passed through the brilliant scene on the Island, as Télémaque followed his Mentor through Hell. He was afraid; he was helpless; he was savagely miserable; but he wanted to keep moving, to be drugged with noise and colour and laughter, in order to still the gnawing at his heart. He found himself surrounded by a bevy of young girls mechanically tossing back the shuttlecock. Cleverly gowned women, and men with keen tired faces, passed him, now with a gay word, now with a not incurious look. The tennis was on, and the brilliant lawns were crowded. A group of men approached him, surrounding a slender white figure half-hidden by veils and parasol.

She turned presently and saw him. He caught her arrested movement, but before he could act, the prince was presenting him to Mrs. Osborne. . . . During the ages that his name was being pronounced, Jerome felt a rushing wind across the lonely peaks around them. He was gazing at her over an abyss in a dim primeval world where neither understood the other's language. The mocking eyes, the

strained little hand at her side, hurt him like a blow. — What were all these people doing around them, when his life's happiness was at stake?

She had murmured a word, and then turned gaily to the prince: —

"*You* here, after all your tirades against us?"

"Why, this young friend of mine is so heartily bored by it all that it is a real pleasure to bore one's self with him. — And you?"

"Oh, I, I am used to it; and in order to avoid boring others, I watch — *comme au spectacle* — these little ladies, these amusing little men."

The prince, with a gesture, offered the foils to Jerome, who answered nonchalantly: "You remind me of Marguerite d'Angoulême — was n't it? — who said, 'I've borne rather more than my share of the boredom common to those well-born.'"

"That describes you to the life!" laughed de Savignac, and she gaily acknowledged: "Touchée. — But that's only when you are not there, prince!"

The Ambassador strolled up and claimed Mrs. Osborne for tea; and de Savignac, with his

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arm in Jerome's, sauntered behind, commenting: "There, mon filleul, is one of the wittiest women in Paris, but armed cap à pied. It's no use!"

Their party had gathered under a wide striped awning for tea, and cool drinks were passed about.

Jerome sat next to the princess, who had driven over with Mrs. Osborne, and who was frankly pleased to see her American cousin again. The two were soon bandying reminiscences of his boyhood pranks, and neither noticed the young Frenchman who sat on the other side. Lucien Meyer, however, small, chic, with faintly pencilled mustache, had no intention of being left out, and with the tact and persistency which accorded with the galbe of his nose, he broke in:—

"So, M. Leigh began early, then?" And, seeing the attention of all present fixed on himself at last, he quoted, with a meaning gesture:—

"Je reviens, tel que tu me vois,
D'un long voyage en Italie.
Du paradis j'ai fait le tour,

J'ai fait des vers, j'ai fait l'amour.

Mais que t'importe? . . .

Bonjour, Suzon!"

The impudence of it raised a laugh. Jerome stared curiously at the young man — he had never laid eyes on him before — and with a shrug, strolled away from the crowd.

"Well," said the princess stoutly, looking after him, "if our Jérôme has made love, he has also made masterpieces, — as you all saw at the Salon. — And that's more than any of you have done! What have *we* ever made but des gaffes — or des bons mots?"

In the midst of the protests, Jerome drew quietly nearer to Mrs. Osborne, who stood looking away towards the tennis. The others had become absorbed in the match and his eyes could rest unseen on the beautiful dark head. A passion of pain and longing swept over him. Would he ever see her alone?

When she turned again, her eyes met his deliberately, and he realized that she allowed this as the only time that he might speak to her. The courting of New England, he reflected half-humourously, was in the nature of a duel.

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She would give no choice of ground or weapons, but she was willing to grant him the encounter. His eyes returned her challenge steadily and he strolled along beside her, with carefully disengaged manner, and his voice low: —

“I have been unlucky in not finding you at home, marquise. Since your cable, I have been waiting for this day. . . .”

“Yes? You have passed the time agreeably, it appears, in the interval?”

“I have worked,” he retorted gravely, “and played — hard. The interval was a long one. When may I see you, away from — all this?”

“That would be a pity, don’t you think? I enjoy — all this.”

“You have changed much.” He bit his lip, feeling the ground slipping away from under him. The heat may have had something to do with this, and the excitement telling on his body spent with fever. Perhaps she divined something, for she said not unkindly: —

“You look rather pale. Do you wish to sit down?”

“Thanks, — no.” Then, looking steadily away from her at the crowd: “I have been ill;

but I came as soon as I could get up. I have waited only for this moment. I love you." He did not look at her; and, as she made no reply: "Will you see me, if I come to-morrow?" he asked gently.

"I think it will be unnecessary, Mr. Leigh."

The words hurt him not so much by their meaning as by their smoothness, as though they cost her nothing. She met his strained hurt eyes, and making no effort, in spite of her words, to dismiss him, walked away from the crowd.

The music was playing a waltz, he noticed for the first time, — one of the old sad waltzes that seem at a distance to be only a beating pain. He thought of their dance together, a thousand years ago, in the joyous, irresponsible Boston days. What a barrier had arisen since then between them!

But his manhood rose in revolt at such an obstacle, which he felt should give way before his virile promise. The present, the future were in his hands. How could she decree finality to a man made to overcome barriers?

When she glanced at him again, his yellow

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head was erect, his cane tapped lightly at his heels, and he returned her glance carelessly.

"The place is hardly adapted, is it? But either here or elsewhere! — I have been in hell, my friend. Only something stronger than it could have brought me through. And now —" He squared his shoulders and looked down at her quietly, "Now you must marry me, Mary."

She moved on, looking ahead of her; and he followed with the same suave aloofness of demeanour. His voice deepened.

"Mary, Mary, it was the proof of a love greater than I believed myself capable of. I don't know what you have heard —" He watched her uplifted face with its half-closed lids, and added sadly — "But, I did not altogether fail. . . ."

"It is rather a question of tastes, is it not?" she said lightly, returning the bow of a man who passed. "You have your tastes, I, mine. I'm not Suzon, you see!"

In spite of the gay tone, the little nervous line between her eyes had deepened. He saw that physically, at least, the interview was telling on her, and his tone quickly changed:

"Tell me; would you rather I took you back to the princess?"

"Thank you," she said, with a little smile in spite of herself at his considerateness.

He watched the clear-cut profile as he strolled back beside her: the sensitive high-bred nostril, the steel-grey eyes unyielding. Over the springy velvet grass the little pink daisies held up eager heads. He felt that there were two natures battling within him: one, a man of the world, indifferent but considerate; the other, a child bereft, crying for the moon, sobbing his heart out because the dream had failed him. But it never occurred to him to tell her what had really happened in Rome or to excuse himself. He went on, curiously watching apart his own agony: "There are a good many sides to that question of tastes. A woman generally only sees one of them. One would scarcely wish her different. Yet, a good woman can do much harm, can, in a moment, — because of outward temporary circumstances or of inner temporary ones, — ruin a man's whole life."

"Is a man who is so easily made or marred by a woman, worth troubling about? And how

do you distinguish between a woman's 'temporary inner feelings' and those which a man professes for the time being?"

"You are proficient in debate, marquise—a skill induced by long practice in Boston circles. — Circles, so called, because one goes round and round in them, without ever getting anywhere. Won't you break out of them a moment, Mary, and meet me on merely human ground?"

"It would give us nothing but pain," she answered. "We are too different in temperament. I cannot express myself as you can. I am a clam, you know," she added quaintly, "an amœba."

He laughed with tenderness: "Then you have no sensations! You *must* be logical, or what will become of your comparisons? — No; if you were either of those helpless organisms, I should probably have gobbled you up long ago. As it is, it is the man—the Brute, as you imply—who is begging for a little mercy. To be judged, condemned, and executed without a hearing, before an inconsequential crowd, is hardly my idea of your sense of justice."

"Oh," she cried, "it is I, then, who am doing the hurting, is it? — hurting you — who are not afraid of wounding your friends to the heart!"

He caught his breath, strove to hide his wonder, his fear, laughing: "How can *I* possibly hurt, who stand like Sebastian, hands tied behind my back, my body full of arrows!"

"Yes," she taunted, "and getting all the sympathy and admiration of future generations! While the archers — what did they feel, who obeyed orders without counting the cost?"

"I don't know," Jerome retorted serenely, "you are the best judge, of course, of what the executioners felt!"

They both laughed then, not daring to say more. He saw nothing in the world about him but a dark iris deepening, the unexpected flash of clear blue in which the sky seemed concentrated. But her brows rose as she glanced away from him; her whole body seemed to express, "What do I care?"

"What *do* you care . . .?" He interrupted bitterly; for pain and pleasure following each other so closely, goaded him on to hear the worst.

“If I said what I thought, I should simply regret it always.”

“Oh, it is so much worse to have you *think* things, than to hear you say them! Then, at least, I can show you the truth — the truth as it is at present.” He was bitterly accurate.

“I can’t talk about it. You have hurt friendship too deeply —”

“Oh, never that!” he implored. “It is my one religion. All I have given you has been pure gold, the best I had.”

Again the slight shrug.

“You don’t believe it? You are so surrounded by tinsel and glitter, you don’t know gold when you see it!”

“It was pretty tarnished gold!”

Jerome, cut to the heart, acknowledged this in a low voice: “You are right. But all that can be burned away, has been burned away: assayed in fire and cooled in ice —”

“Ah, you can talk — talk till black seems white, and the moon becomes the sun! — I am no match for you in words. You will succeed in whatever you undertake, for you override everything, — stay always on top —” She

tried to think of a cutting simile, and ended:—
“like those toys which children throw to the floor and which *always* right themselves!”

“Which *children* throw to the floor, children throw —”

She came to a stop. “I can’t bear this much longer! Because of my past friendship for you, I have heard you, but it costs too much—” she drew in her breath sharply; and Jerome in terror, adoring her, happily miserable, followed her to the ferry, believing that because her voice had trembled, all was won. But in this, he had not reckoned with New England. In a fight with Her what chance had nature, earth-forces, youth, and love?

The gay concourse gathered at the entrance, watched them approach, and a woman sailed forward:—“Why, Mary Osborne! when did you arrive? Can you come to tea with me to-morrow at *Ciro’s*?”

“To-morrow? Why, yes, I believe I can.” These challenges she could meet superbly.

She passed with a nod and smile, and they were wafted across the ferry. The princess was already seated in the victoria, talking to a

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group of men. Before landing, Jerome said with dangerous quietness: "Will you let me come now, marquise?"

She roused herself and bravely met his eyes: "Mr. Leigh, I can't! The rest of the world receives you with open arms; you are fêted, pampered — I can't do it."

Jerome echoed only, "Pampered!"

"It is not a question of judging," — the beautiful voice fell on his ears like a death-sentence, — "but merely one of tastes. I wish to have no influence whatever on yours; but I have my own."

He could not believe in such defeat. He whimsically indicated: "These people here, — de Savignac, whom all women love, Lucien Meyer, our little host the attaché — do *they* share your tastes?"

Her eyes flashed: "They are not my intimate friends."

An odd sense of relief flooded Jerome; made something stinging come into his eyes, — It was only her intimate friends, then, whom she would cut off? It made him helpless, it filled him with tenderness; his whole being in revolt

against such summary disposal of a man's life, he was yet overwhelmed by the femininity of the logic.

They had come to the end. He leaned on his stick and looked down at her whimsically: "So this is our good-bye, marquise?"

"Good-bye, Mr. Leigh. I am proud of your success and shall always be glad to hear of your welfare."

She spoke quickly; the deep music of her voice went through him with an infinite sense of desolation. The sun shone and the band played, and pretty women bowed and smiled at him; and he raised his hat mechanically between each stab. He said his last words gazing into the distance: "Marquise, I have loved you through everything. I will love you always, I think. . . . Some people are made that way. And even you —" his lips twisted as she bent over to pick up her train at the carriage steps — "even you, some day, may understand! — Princesse —" He raised his hat as Mme. de Savignac made a little gesture of farewell; and turned away.

The prince joined him, laying a hand on his

arm as he lingered to ask his wife: "You are dining chez vous, mon amie?"

"Why, yes," the princess smiled.

"I may join you later. — Good-bye, madame!" he added gaily to Mrs. Osborne. "I am glad you have had a talk with this brilliant young man. His father was a dear friend of mine, a perfect knight who fought for a lost cause, and died of a broken heart, if ever a man did! Jérôme resembles him . . . only *he* succeeds, in love and fame!"

Mrs. Osborne raised her parasol, smiled at the little group of men; and the victoria rolled away.

The princess leaned back, her eyes brightening: — "It was really quite a successful party, don't you think, my dear?"

XXVI

I loved a Love once, fairest among women.
Closed are her doors to me, I must not see her —
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

JEROME, on the brake beside his grey-hatted, white-haired friend who handled the ribbons with such consummate skill, sped down the glittering avenue as in a maze.

"Your lips are pale, mon vieux," remarked the prince. "Roman fever, hein? Living at the rate of sixty miles a minute? But with all your bonnes fortunes, you artists should not burn the candle at both ends!"

Jerome laughed. "Most of us have n't much time for the other end. And in Rome, that paradise of loafers, I worked six months without a holiday. As for the kind of successes you credit us with — mine, I need hardly tell you, exist solely in the fertile brains of your crowd."

"So? Is anything wrong with you, my boy? You know, I have considered you always as one of my family."

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"You are more than kind." He stared at the long line of motors filing past. Though the prince was perfectly aware, out of the corner of his eye, of the satisfactory nature of the effect his own turn-out was producing, there was not the slightest failure in his courteous attention, and Jerome the artist, the dreamer, the lover of life, was aching to lay his problem before a sympathetic brain. The old prince had lived hard; but his nature, intrinsically sweet, had mellowed with time, and he had a big heart, an open mind.

Never could Jerome tell him the circumstances of his passion; but his fancy longed to play about it; as a child can hardly keep from touching the edges of his hurt. The words broke from him —

"What would you think, if some one, in my own land, had decided to turn me down, *because* of those same 'successes' — which, I repeat, were not even successes?"

"Humph!" said the prince thoughtfully; "I see, — a *jeune fille*?"

"Oh, more *jeune fille* than any of your *jeunes filles*! — like your sweetest, most intangible

kind of *jeune fille*." Jerome was smiling tenderly at the Arc de Triomphe.

The prince, glancing aside at him, shook his head. They bowled around the corner deftly, and cantered down between the chestnut trees.

"I see, — a *puritaine*," murmured the Frenchman. "I have loved that kind myself. They are rare. But they drive a man to ruin more often than any other kind!"

Jerome laughed. "Of course, *you* would like them — just because you are — different."

The other nodded. "We are all like that, who are dreamers — always wanting the impossible. Of course, that type of woman — one would do one's utmost to get, at any cost. And if one fails — one worships it forever!"

His blue eyes glared restlessly ahead of him. Then he flourished his whip: "But you must not get discouraged, Jérôme. The most desperate resistance, on a woman's part, is always just before the end."

"Oh, but there is no end — of that kind — for me!"

"Why not? Do you know women? — She is grown up, goes about, I suppose?"

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“Oh, yes; she sees all the usual kind of people, on both sides —”

“Eh bien alors? She’s seen men — well, worse, even, than you are?” he laughed.

“She told me she would not see *me* any more.”

The prince turned his keen glance on Jerome: “But then, my friend, — she loves you!”

“Oh, no, no, no!” The protests poured out of him, to hide the startled sweetness that sped through his veins at his friend’s absurd, insane conclusion. Yet he sat still a long space, letting it sink into his misery and lay a hand of heavenly stillness on all the raging pain. He had shut his eyes; and in that moment of hope, too frail to last, his exhausted body took a grip on life which was to save it later.

The prince’s silence — the silence of one who had contentedly found the key to an enigma and left it to his friend to use — helped to restore Jerome to his usual humorous scepticism.

“Your Gallic flights of imagination, *mon parrain!*”

“I know women,” returned the other quaintly. “At my age! I should hope so.

(Though, to be sure, that has nothing to do with it.) I don't mean to say, however, that she will give in. A puritaine, who loves, is less likely to give in than any other woman. If she ever does — well, it won't be because you want it (they are adamant!). Nor because she herself wants it (that would debar her!). But for the sake of some one else, who may be benefited by it — some one quite outside of that love."

He mused, head sunk, his eyes between his leaders' ears.

Jerome felt an uncanny sense of prophecy in the old man, which made him both grateful and amused.

But the prince would not leave it at that. "You, my friend, must think of only one thing now: your health. I will send you my doctor. You are, or I'm much mistaken, on the edge of a break-down."

"Oh, no!" laughed Jerome. "I'm not that kind, I assure you. Malaria — what's that? I'm as strong as an ox. And in a few days, the voyage —"

"Perhaps. Before you go, lunch with me, will you? next Sunday, en famille."

XXVII

Partir, c'est mourir un peu,
C'est mourir, à ce qu'on aime . . .

THE little Muriel took a hand of Germaine and of le gros Émile, and danced between them into the dining-room of the hôtel de Savignac. They were all going to the Tir au Pigeons afterwards, and Muriel had been full of enthusiasm over it, when she caught a glimpse of Jerome Leigh talking to the princess in the conservatory. She stopped short.

"Who — when did he come?" she asked Germaine, struggling between a desire to run and greet him, and a curious fear at seeing him in Paris.

"Why," said de Savignac genially, overhearing the question and coming up with a hand on Jerome's shoulder: "This is my eldest son! — Miss Osborne."

Jerome was startled, too, for other reasons. There was no cause to make a mystery of it, nor to explain: so he simply shook hands and

looked after Muriel as her puzzled, hurt eyes turned back as if to question him.

"You sail soon?" asked the princess, who had been watching him. "I am sorry Mrs. Osborne could not come to-day. She was not feeling well."

Jerome said evenly: "I am sorry, too. — Yes, I sail in three days from Cherbourg." He wondered if his cousin had learned or divined anything about Mrs. Osborne and himself. If so, he did not help her, unless she noted his eyes wandering across the table to Muriel's brown head, poised so like her mother's on the graceful little shoulders. Though she was now fifteen, she was smaller and more fragile than the young de Savignacs; with much of the beauty of the older woman, but a more wistful, touching charm, as of one who thought and felt far more than she could show. Jerome's smile met hers tenderly. He hoped to be able to speak to her for a moment alone. She was the last link in his lost happiness.

The opportunity came when, luncheon over, the prince joined his children in a romp on the terrace. He always spent Sundays with them;

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and neither duty nor pleasure could draw him from this custom. It was hard to believe that the reckless gambler at Monte Carlo, the adorer of the latest dancer, was the same as this genial contented father of a family, following the example of Henri IV on the lawn.

Jerome leaned against the balustrade near a clump of blue hortensias and watched his little friend. The children were playing some English game: moving round in procession singing words that haunted him with their gentle monotony and reference to some long-forgotten tragedy: —

“Off to prison she must go —
My fair Lady!”

“Oh, won’t you come and talk to me?” he called to Muriel, as it ended.

She came at once from the tumbling group of younger children and dogs, and he took her hands eagerly: —

“Muriel, tell me, — is she ill, your mother?”

“Yes, — no. I don’t quite know what the matter is. She is not exactly ill; only very tired. — Oh, Jerome, why have you never been to see us?”

"I have been so busy!" he stammered, white to the lips, realizing that Mrs. Osborne had told her nothing.

"Oh, that does n't sound a bit like you! You were never 'busy' in Cambridge, even when you were working all day —"

"I know; I — I must go now, Muriel."

"Please don't go. Listen!"

The princess was playing, indoors, a serenade of Debussy's. It set Jerome's nerves on edge with its subtle wild sweetness; and he sank on the step beside the hortensias, and dropped his head on his hand.

"You look — not well, either," said Muriel, with her curious old little manner. "Please tell me! There is something — something that makes everything all upset. What is it?"

"Why, Muriel," — he plucked a leaf and began dissecting it with his long nervous fingers; "I don't know what you — what I —"

"I am fifteen now," she said gravely. "I am grown up. Mother does not know it; but I am. I only know that something is wrong —"

Jerome looked at her uncertainly. This was not the child he had left a year ago. Paris is a

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hard teacher, brilliant as she is: not even the children escape.

"I don't know, Muriel. I could never explain to her . . . How did *you* know anything?" His brows drew suddenly down.

"They were talking to mother. They did not notice me; I was playing with a dog in the window-seat. One said: 'Jerome Leigh is in Paris again.' A woman there — I did not like her — laughed, and said you had been playing pretty hard in Rome. — Then I heard the name of the one who posed for your fresco —"

Jerome drew in his breath sharply. "Go on!"

"That's all. Mr. Warren, who was there, told them they were 'away behind the times': that you and Golda had known each other for years, just as he had."

"Yes, yes."

"But the first woman said sharply, 'Why, Lucien himself saw them both at Frascati, getting on a train —'"

"And your mother —?" breathed Jerome, dry-lipped.

"She did not seem to hear. She just gave the

woman a cup of tea, saying, 'More lemon?' And then they all talked of the races."

There was a silence. Muriel leaned forward whispering: "Every one is so unhappy! Mother never speaks; and I try and try to understand till the darkness of things frightens me!"

"Oh, my little girl, if I told you?" — he looked out perplexed across the lawn. "I can't!"

"I don't think anything can be as bad as not knowing. Even you — are *you* happy?"

"Happy! I feel like death!" He gnawed his mustache, reflecting. Finally: "I'm not a 'very perfect knight,' you know, Muriel; but I can tell you this: There are those who fight the Seven Deadly Sins, and they are those who throw themselves into their arms. Hieronymus did not fight: he let himself be knocked down; but he rose to his feet again. He did not conquer the enemy; nor hate them; but he overcame — himself. All this sounds pretty mixed-up for a little girl, does n't it? But it's the truth — what there is of it. At the darkest moment of the battle, when Hieronymus was ready to lay down his arms, the gleam shone . . .

and he left everything to follow it." He turned his face away.

"Of course you would be like that," she said, as if to herself. "Why does n't mother understand!"

Jerome searched her face, troubled. "Ah, Muriel, she never would! You will be with her, in a little while, — can look at her — talk to her! But I shall be separated from her by more than the Atlantic Ocean. There are things in people's lives that they can never talk about — even in a child's life, I imagine, — hidden gardens, which may make them glad or sad to look at, — but into which no one but themselves can ever enter. I would never be able to explain, because I could never speak of it. I could only tell her that, in spite of everything she may have heard or thought, I have cared for her beautiful friendship beyond anything on earth. And this" — his face was uplifted like a man's in a forlorn hope — "I have deserved — and she *must* give —"

"Yes," whispered the child, as if to herself.

"She would not listen, Muriel! That is the bitterest punishment that could be dealt a man.

— Now,” he went on in a lighter tone, “I have a shrewd suspicion that my friend Hieronymus at this juncture would do one of two things: Either he would go down to the beasts and drink himself to death; or he would knock his own or somebody’s else brains out. But I, look you, have not that romantic temperament.” He clasped his hands around his knee and half closed his eyes, smiling. “I shall simply go back to a garret in a New York sky-scraper, to work and work and work — Muriel, I can’t talk any more!” He jumped up and held out a hand.

She gave him hers earnestly. “Some day, I shall understand. But oh, write to us, Jerome!” The small face was drawn up in a pathetic effort not to show her feeling.

Jerome said hastily: “Of course. Some day, if I go back to Cambridge, I’ll run in and see your flower-beds and tell you about them. — Good-bye, my truest little friend!” He bent, kissed the small hand, sprang up the steps and was gone.

XXVIII

Mon pauvre enfant, ta voix dans le Bois de Boulogne!

VERLAINE

JEROME was gone; but the seeds unconsciously sown in the garden of a child's mind grew and flourished. It was characteristic of that young man that though his presence was often enough to array people against him, his absence made itself felt in a still stronger degree. If he had obtained a foothold in those mysterious regions which Mrs. Osborne deprecatingly termed her mind, it was through no other quality but that of his protracted absences. Nothing more tangible would have been admitted there.

But Muriel, who felt quite simply that the old gaiety was gone, that life was curiously sad without that joyous companionship and security she felt with Jerome, saw that the event had cast a shadow even on her beautiful mother. She brooded over the manner of clearing this away with secret terror and hope. Heroic

adventures abounded in the world of books in which she lived. Why should she not be the one to find the key to that lost happiness?

And all this time, unknown to her and to Jerome, the person, who had so closely touched their lives and changed them, was living but a few yards away.

Behind the brilliant apartment of Mrs. Osborne, in a little house in the Rue Saint-Honoré, with iron balconies and dark portecochère which never opened to visitors now, lived secluded the beautiful Mme. X., the widow of one of the greatest littérateurs of France, member of the Academy, winner of the Nobel Prize.

The great man had died recently, in the heats of August. The splendid eulogiums had subsided, the dust had gathered on the wreaths at Père-la-Chaise, and the public was looking eagerly forward to the election of a new Immortal.

Curious neighbours saw only a black-veiled, slender figure emerge from the house, take its way to Saint Philippe-du-Roule for early Mass, and at evening roll into the courtyard in a

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brougham severely appointed, with coachman and footman in sable liveries.

Mme. X. would descend, followed by her dogs, always alone, at the little tea-place on the Chaussée-d'Antin, every afternoon "pour son five-o'clock" and return invariably at six. The most strenuous curiosity could discover no other distractions.

The tea-rooms were frequented almost exclusively by quietly dressed French people, old habitués, who grew to know each other's faces. No one ever spoke to the beautiful pale woman, whose blond hair and shadowed eyes shone dimly through heavy crêpe. She commanded respect.

Yet she was well known. When Mlle. Juliette Berg took the little Muriel to tea there one afternoon after their daily sight-seeing, and caught a view of the silent figure in the corner, she placed her pupil opposite her, and herself curiously observed the fascinating face.

Muriel noticed her absent-mindedness, and stared about her to discover its cause. The quiet place appealed to her, the high modulated French voices, with their delicious satisfying

accent, so different from the French she had heard in Cambridge. Muriel wondered endlessly about people; yet not more than she wondered about her own blue-eyed, fragile French teacher, of good family suffering from reverses, who taught her solfège and the Rois Mérovingiens.

Her life was a curiously lonely one for a child; for, though she was taken to see the prim little girls of the American Colony, whose dancing and singing-lessons she duly shared, and though her mother took her driving with her a good deal, she had no actual life of her own. And so it came about that her most congenial companion in her prowls around the hotels and churches of the Marais, or in the recesses of the Bois, was the melancholy, somewhat bitter, and yet brilliant Frenchwoman to whom Mrs. Osborne had confided her for her accent.

They had gone together to the *matinées classiques* at the Français to see plays that were appropriate to *jeunes filles* — “*Phèdre*,” for instance; “*Cdipe Roi*,” that made her shudder at night with remembered horror; — all the refined self-tortures of Racine. Literature, as

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literature, did not appeal to Muriel, but she found in it food for dreams, clues to the ever-absorbing, ever-tormenting riddle of existence.

So now, when she noticed the preoccupation of her beloved governess in the person behind her, she leaned forward, whispering: —

“Who is it? A friend of yours?”

“No, no!” returned the other, startled. “But every one knows her. She is certainly very beautiful. . . .”

“I want to see her!”

“No, my child; you must not turn around. She is the widow of one of our great writers. I will read you some extracts from his works. But she is not of your world. She is not received . . .”

“Why not? — if he was a great man, and she his widow? —”

Mlle. Berg turned her face away ruminating. Mrs. Osborne had given her a wide latitude in regard to this child. She had told her that she did not wish her stilted or guindée in her ideas; that she believed that she should be able to enjoy the best in a large Cosmopolitan way. — Whether or not these somewhat vague theories

fitted the present occasion, Mlle. Juliette could hardly feel certain. But the dim quiet place, the sense of an oasis in the turmoil of the wicked city, the knowledge that sooner or later these things must reach even the ears of the little American girl opposite her, made her say, hurriedly:—

“Listen, Muriel; there are things . . . She was not his wife at first . . . and afterwards he married her. So she is not received in your world—though many would go to her if she let them; for she is clever and very rich.”

Muriel was silent so long that the teacher began nervously to gather up her things.

“Have you finished your brioche? Then go on ahead while I put on my jacket.”

Muriel rose obediently, turned, looked at the unknown a moment as though overwhelmed, and to the amazement and horror of *mademoiselle*, started towards Golda with outstretched hands.

The woman in black rose uncertainly, with startled eyes; and turned away, so that the child could not meet her.

“Come! Come quickly!” called the govern-

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ess under her breath; and as they passed out into the October twilight, she demanded sharply: "Why did you do that, after what I told you?"

"But I know her," said Muriel, trembling.

"You know her!"

"But yes—in America—" She seemed about to add something, but shut her little lips and walked ahead, looking very straight before her.

The Frenchwoman, who had a strong sense of the dramatic, was tempted to question further, but she felt that things had gone far enough already, and that silence would most quickly obliterate the event from the sensitive mind of Muriel.

She had every reason to believe that this result had been attained when, soon after, the course of the drama in her own existence drowned all recollections of a minor tragedy.

During all her previous life with Muriel, she had preserved a strictly impersonal pedagogic attitude. But one day, Muriel had seen her governess turn white when a young Frenchman, blond-mustached, had passed her, carelessly raising his hat.

The other had said mechanically to hide her confusion: "That was my cousin."

"He is good-looking," said Muriel judicially.

"You find? He is a great egoist. He is spoilt. But he has talent, le gredin —" She had smiled one of her wistful bitter smiles; and Muriel pondered on it.

Then, one day, as they were coming home, an elegant little brougham stopped before a portecochère and a figure, heavily veiled, issued from it and disappeared into the entrance.

"Why," said Muriel, surprised, "that's the ingénue in 'Les Romanesques,' and 'Andromaque,' and — and —"

"Yes," said Mlle. Berg grimly, "it is Antoinette Algol. She is young and girlish; is she not? She is forty-seven. I knew her before she was famous. And it is she who has ruined my life."

Before the sombre fury, the clenched hand of the Frenchwoman, Muriel was silent, sensing a tragedy.

The other gazed over her shoulder as the brougham rolled away empty; and the colour came back to her face.

"Pardon," she murmured. "I suffer. You must forget, child!" and she forced a smile.

Muriel seized her hand impulsively.

"Oh, mademoiselle, I knew, I knew you were unhappy. Don't be sad all alone!"

The tears came into the faded blue eyes under the high arched brows. They were sitting now in Muriel's study; and the Frenchwoman pressed the tears resolutely back into eyes that ached. "No, no! I have no right to trouble you. — Forget!"

"How can I, if you are sad?" the child's voice was trembling too, and she leaned her cheek against the other's knee and pleaded: "Won't you tell me?"

The older woman, touched, stared a long while out of the window. Finally: "There is much pain, little Muriel, in this great gay city, this cruel remorseless Paris! I can tell you this. We were affianced when we were children. When my father was ruined, *his* mother tried to break it off: but he would not. He was chivalrous as Bayard, and we loved each other. But he was rich, I, poor: — I offered to release him; he would not hear of it. We agreed to wait five

years. The time was up last month, when this Algot woman caught him — went to his garçonnière. — She adores young men — lives on them, vampire that she is!”

Muriel gave a tremor; and the woman caught herself up.

“Oh, but yes — she has made me suffer! He forgot everything. . . . He is as though bewitched — I can do nothing but watch him perish.”

“Oh, but he will come back to you, — he *will!*” cried the little girl; and then, with a wail: “Oh, why must such things be?”

“Chut! you must not take it so, chérie!” She paused listening. Mrs. Osborne’s step sounded lightly in the hall; and the woman glided onto the piano-stool. A Chopin prelude stole out in the dim school-room, full of a strange passion. Mrs. Osborne, pausing to listen outside, vaguely stirred, thought to herself, “I have obtained a real musician to teach my little girl.”

The sense of mutual suffering brought the two very close together; but with all her sym-

pathy for others, Muriel never told of the one tragedy which was haunting and sapping her own childish life.

Was it possible that what this man was doing, Jerome had done? Were all men so? Were women simply made to suffer and forgive? — Yet she could not, somehow, think of the Frenchman with his blond head and brooding eyes as being made of the same clay as Jerome. And Jerome had told her: — “I did not conquer; but I have not altogether failed. And throughout, I remembered the gleam . . .”

If she could only know! If only some one, old and wise, could answer her questions! She felt that no woman would. Her mother had never talked things over with her. She had been allowed to discover, brusquely, by stray words, by phrases in the books she was left to browse amongst, dim facts vaguely terrifying. Then, a great Greek poem, of real agony, real beauty, had torn the veil from her eyes, and she had sobbed herself to sleep. Life — that great vague looming monster — was unimaginably cruel and brutal. She dreaded to touch upon it with her teacher. She hid inside her own heart.

Yet all these people around her seemed so light-hearted, in the Bois, on the Champs-Élysées (she was never allowed to go on the Boulevards). How could they laugh and play when Life and Love were so devouring? What she had discovered did not warp her character; but made her suffer in a way few grown-up people realize that children can suffer.

Golda's white face and haunted eyes came before her again. *She* had the key to the enigma, the truth which was breaking all their hearts. She must be found, and then she would make all straight.

Mrs. Osborne was persuaded, during a week of holidays, to go to the little tea-rooms in the Chaussée-d'Antin. She liked the place, and went there again. On neither occasion had the lady in black appeared. Muriel, burning with impatience, persuaded her mother to return a day or two later; and found Golda in her corner.

The little girl managed to be placed so that she alone could look at her; and passed the meal in an agony of apprehension.

After one look at them, Golda had turned

away her eyes, and stared out of the window, slowly crumbling a brioche.

The Osbornes finished first. As they were moving out, Muriel turned swiftly back and spoke to the woman in mourning:—

“Madame, let me see you somewhere a moment!”

The other, startled, shook her head sadly, vehemently; and at the same instant Mrs. Osborne turned.

Muriel saw her glance swiftly, puzzled, at the figure in the sable coat, then fixedly, and turn with all her features hardened.

The other still looked away from them, her chin raised, her eyes full of a melancholy which she neither sought to show nor to conceal.

Nothing further happened, there was no explanation; and as they passed into the dripping street, Muriel felt that happiness would never shine on them again.

But before her governess returned from her holiday, an idea struck her which had never entered her head before. She found out where the great man had lived; went to a florist's shop and ordered a bunch of white roses to be sent

to that address; and writing on a card, "May I see you? It is very serious," enclosed it with her address. Her maid, who was devoted and indulgent, suspected nothing.

Then followed two days of suspense, till the answer came. Mrs. Osborne never opened her daughter's letters, respecting both her independence and her good sense. But the old butler Alphonse hesitated, as any Frenchman would, to deliver a letter addressed to a little girl. Muriel, however, saw the *petit-bleu* on the tray, and quickly held out her hand for it, saying she knew that it was for her, and that her mother would not be home for hours.

Then, as soon as she was alone, she tore off the perforated edge.

It was written in French: "You must not try to see me or even to write to me, dear, dear little girl. But I thank you for the beautiful roses. It was so like what *he* would have done, it nearly broke my heart." It was signed "Golda."

The tears sprang to Muriel's eyes. — Oh, why did everyone make it so hard? The truth could not be so cruel, so destroying, as this conspiracy of silence!

Mrs. Osborne noticed Muriel's white cheeks, and anxiously consulted a doctor as to the advisability of going South. The child was clearly anæmic. But when the journey was discussed, she pleaded so desperately to remain in Paris that Mrs. Osborne, troubled and uncertain, gave in.

Muriel was biding her time. She haunted the Bois de Boulogne, feeling that it was the place, in this melancholy autumn, where a broken heart would naturally seek refuge. She went every morning to the Avenue des Acacias, and looked with quickening heart-beats at every figure in black she saw coming.

Finally, early one misty morning, she saw the slender figure she knew walking apart with her dogs, the carriage following at a distance.

Muriel quickly executed the plan which she had long thought out. She asked her governess to take one of the little yellow chairs and wait for her, while she went to gather beech-nuts; and turning down the narrow winding path, she ran straight to Golda.

The other stopped, and her hand flew to her heart.

"Oh, listen to me," cried the child breathlessly, touching her crêpe with a trembling hand. "It is the happiness of all of us that depends on what you say. — He has been very ill —"

"Jerome?"

"— And I know he suffered; and we are all separated for a thing I do not understand."

Golda turned to beckon to the footman to take the dogs away and await her by the carriage, which had stopped. Then, she walked swiftly forward into the screen of brown leaves, head bent, her hands straining together. Finally, she said to Muriel: "Chère petite, you must not, must not speak to me. It would make your mother very unhappy. You must never see me again."

"I promise, madame! Only this once — I *must* know —"

"What do you wish to know?"

Muriel clasped her hands: "Did he care for you?"

The cruel candour of the question struck Golda to the heart. But with all her woman's pride she had the courage, the almost quixotic self-immolation of her race.

"No, Muriel. We left Rome on the impulse of a moment. My friend was with us. I saw Jerome on the terrace that evening. And I never spoke to him after that. He left — with the cup at his lips —" she paused, forgetting the child; and her eyes shone. "For a moment he almost cared. But he was always a strange boy, a Galahad, a lover of far gleams. . . . He could have had everything: and he left it untouched. It cost him — perhaps. Who knows? But he cared all his life for unattainable things. His brain, his soul, were somewhere else . . ."

"Oh, I knew I was right!" It was a shuddering cry of relief; and standing desolate in the November woods, Golda drew her furs more closely about her.

Muriel took the hand that hung at Golda's side and laid her cheek timidly against it. "Everything is clear now. I will go."

The other smiled down at her a little bleakly. "There is no reason, *now*, is there, why everybody should not be happy? — Is what I have told you enough? I can give more tangible proofs — which your mother, at least, would understand: The world's standards, you can

tell her, were maintained. My own marriage proves that."

She turned her face away to conceal the bitterness that was distorting her mouth. Muriel, at a loss what to say, now that her point was gained, wanted to run away. But her inborn gentleness kept her from regarding at once the persistent calls of her governess, who now approached them, frantic with anxiety. It was Golda who turned away, letting down her veils, and murmuring in a stifled voice:—

"Adieu, petite. I hope you can all feel happy — now!"

XXIX

Oh, Pleasure has changed dwelling in our souls,
And when full Being comes, must call on Pain
To send it liberal space.

GEORGE ELIOT

VERY secret and stern is childhood in its reticences, in its judgments. A New England child, even with the wistful expansiveness of Muriel, would not give away its treasure without great preparation.

It would be hopeless, she felt, to get near her mother in the open, crowded existence they led in Paris. People were always around them; Mrs. Osborne, in wonderful draperies, was always just coming in or just going out, with only so many minutes to spare. No shy joy or pain will count its time-allowance in advance. It prefers to remain unknown.

And Mrs. Osborne had all the feverish energy, the vitality, and the daring which Bostonians suddenly discover when far from Boston. In the Quartier de l'Étoile, many of her Back Bay friends were to be found; and they went about together, fearfully investigating

Parisian life as depicted on the stage for the enlightenment of foreigners; while the French people themselves were immersed in problem-plays, germs, and socialism.

Her lovely gowns, her badinage, the quiet perfection of her aspect, were appreciated in that light-hearted coterie which feels itself the world, and flutters butterfly-like over the seething mass of Paris. Even Muriel in her high tower realized far more than her mother the underlying tragedy of the place; and in her sedate Old-World manner, took part in things of which she only dimly felt the import. The children of some of these much-admired expatriates made remarks amongst themselves which were little less than cynical. Muriel heard one twelve-year-old declare: "Papa likes Paris because it's so cheap; Mamma likes it because it's immoral." Other remarks, overheard from governesses, from comrades at the Cours, were freely repeated. Muriel took an instinctive dislike to the type of Latin who frequents American salons; and to her, Jerome Leigh seemed the best and bravest of the men she met.

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It was not until a week after the encounter with Golda that a long day spent alone with her mother among the fading glories of Fontainebleau gave Muriel the opportunity she sought.

It was exciting to have her beautiful mother all to herself, to speak shyly of forest adventures dreamed of in city streets; to wander through galleries and terraces dedicated to Diane de Poitiers, with whose history, like that of Agnès Sorel or Mme. de Pompadour, she was far more familiar than with that of her own country. When they finally sat with their teabasket in the deep recesses of the ancient royal chase, under the autumn canopy of oaks, Muriel felt that her mother's heart and thoughts were hers, — that she could show her the corded and sealed. With a beating heart, her fingers digging into the moss beneath her, she began her story of the last few weeks.

Word for word, the conversations with her governess, with Jerome at the Savignacs', were repeated with the startling veracity of childhood, unconscious of deeper implications. When her mother, frozen into immobility by the unexpected revelation, remained silent, Muriel

sat up suddenly and, with a long breath, brought out: "But, now it is all right. Golda told me about it."

"Told *you*—!"

The cry of horror was not understood. Muriel felt only that her mother's suspense must be, like hers, about Jerome. And while Mrs. Osborne dared to take no step for fear of the breaking ice all about her, Muriel hurried on: "Yes, yes. In the Bois. I met her one morning—I had been searching and searching! She looked very sad, and sent away the footman; but at first, she would not stop to speak—because you would not like it—"

Mrs. Osborne dropped her face in her hand. "How *could* you, Muriel, speak to any one like that!"

"I could n't—to any one. But Golda was different; she knew and could tell us. And she did.—About Frascati, I mean; and how Jerome left her and her friend on the terrace after dinner, and she had never seen him since . . . She said: 'He had the cup at his lips; and he would not take it. He was always one to love impossible things.'—I knew that,"—the child

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added softly. "He is like the knights in the 'Morte Darthur.'"

Her shining eyes were gazing down the forest aisles, where king and courtesan had swept by in their pride, and the naked trees shook down the last gold of the year. But Mrs. Osborne had sunk back among the roots of the oak, as though some inner force had abandoned her.

She had no thought for Jerome; not a moment's thought for the heroic confession of Golda. One thing only loomed before her, as the initial tragedy of her life — Muriel. What had happened to her child, close to her, unknown to her, during all this time? How could she herself have lived on, never suspecting, while Muriel came in contact with vital dangers like these?

All her life, even while mixing in a cosmopolitan world (as far as an image mixes in a vast concourse on state occasions), she had kept her skirts away from the touch of life, from humanity in its grossness, its evil, its suffering. . . . She had compassion. She helped, as far as in her lay, from afar. But she had always remained aloof; and now, her little girl, her only

child, whom she had guarded so carefully, had gone down into the depths alone, had laid her hand, unwittingly, on the bare facts of life. — She pressed her fingers against her eyes, her still form shaken by a wrenching agony such as she had never known till now.

Muriel lay on the moss at her feet, instinctively taking refuge again in the reticence that had always reigned between them. But at last, terrified by the long silence, and the sight of the stricken face she loved, she put a hand timidly on her mother's, that closed convulsively over it.

"All these months!" murmured Mrs. Osborne. "Ah, Muriel, why did you not tell me?"

"I wanted to bring you the truth to comfort you. I had to wait. But now that we have found it, — nothing can ever be bad again."

The curious serenity of the little girl accentuated Mrs. Osborne's remorse. Again and again she saw the sunny school-room, the little brown head bent over the maps and cahiers, the neat figure in its carefully chosen frocks — so clear and uncomplicated, almost monotonous. And all this time, what pain and ques-

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tioning undergone, undreamed of by the heart nearest her!

They were very close together when the motor brought them home; Muriel, happy from the long day in the forest, and the secret unburdened, prattled of the visit she was going to pay Germaine de Savignac. It was not until the little girl was busy with her governess under the evening lamp that Mrs. Osborne, giving up her engagement at the theatre, in the stillness of the twilight, remembered Jerome.

XXX

Et puis, voici mon cœur qui ne bat que pour vous;
Ne le déchirez pas avec vos deux mains blanches. . . .

VERLAINE

It was one of those warm brooding evenings that occasionally come in a Paris winter. She sat on the high balcony of her apartment, looking off towards the Arch and the dying glow. D'Annunzio's words, as Jerome once quoted them, flashed across her mind: "Never do I attain anything through uncertainty or accident; but always through the triumphant arch of my desire!"

When Alphonse came out with a long wooden box and a letter, she let them lie on her knees unopened, her disillusioned eyes brooding on the scene below, her hands, heavy with sapphires, listlessly holding the fur open at her throat, as though she found difficulty in breathing. So Muriel found her, and ran up anxiously: —

"In the dark? Mother, what is it? Oh — a letter for me?"

Mrs. Osborne read the superscription with

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raised eyebrows: "Miss Muriel Osborne" in bold strong characters; and handed it to her with a smile.

"For me? — from New York? Why, mother, it's from Jerome."

Her mother hesitated, but her tones were even. "He writes to you? I did not know."

"Never before. What *can* he say in it! Of course, it will be a message for you." She became absorbed in the first lines; then looked laughingly upwards, as she settled at her mother's feet: "There is nothing whatever of you in it!"

Mrs. Osborne looked down at her, stroking the soft brown head; and the cover of the box on her knees slid to the ground.

"Oh, mother, what roses!" The crimson jacqueminots, heavy and wet and dark, filled the night with passionate fragrance. "Is n't there any card with them?"

"No. Read your letter, Muriel."

When she finally lifted the flowers, a hard substance fell through the leaves, and she languidly felt for it, and looked down at a man's seal ring, with the crests of Gordon, Noel,

Byron. Her hand closed on it, and she leaned forward suddenly, staring down at the crowded street.

. . . A sunset on the Embankment — how long ago? And a man's voice pleading: "If I send my ring to you, as Essex sent to the Queen, in an hour of bitter need, will you listen and understand?"

She could understand now. Would she listen?

She looked at the strong band of gold with its three knightly crests. How like him to trust his most treasured possession to a box of flowers across the sea! And the roses were fresh. . . . Of course, he saw to that. It was the mediæval way of him.

What a boy he was! And she? a peg to hang his shining dreams on. She acknowledged the humour of it: a proud humour all her own, full of self-depreciation but impenetrable as armour. — Twenty-nine, she thought to herself; thirty-four; and she saw the Osbornes, — all their faces, their correct, straight bodies, their complacency, their astonishment. . . . She shaded her eyes with her hand, realizing with a kind of wonder, that her heart was beating

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loudly. For a second the sound overwhelmed even the roar of Paris. Then, she heard again the boy whistling "Louise" down the side street, the hoarse cries of "V'là la Patrie! cinq centimes, la Patrie!" the continual whirring of motors in the evening sky. Flashing lights of the pleasure-seekers rushed by her. The Osbornes were sinking below the tide of the stream of life and love. . . .

Paris was speaking to her now — the voice of the city she loved but had never dared to listen to. He, too, loved it, had been brought up by it. Yet he had given his youth and strength to his native land. He would win there, finally, she knew; but the blade was wearing out the sheath. He did not know how to save himself.

What did she do but save herself? — and for what? In a few years Muriel would marry, and would inherit her grandfather's fortune. Jerome wanted his wife to bring him nothing but herself, that she should derive everything from him. She laughed a little in her heart. — How was he faring in New York, that lover of "most high Poverty?" —

"Read the letter aloud, Muriel."

The child spread out the sheets with a sigh of contentment, and read clearly:—

“My little Playmate:— I must tell you that I went to Cambridge, and saw the bed of lilies you planted, and they prospered so. McCarthy is proud of you. The place is not rented; though a nice old gentleman from St. Paul with three daughters came all the way from Minnesota to see me about it.

“On Sunday, I went to hear the music on the Embankment and sat at a little table and watched the crowds. Almost everybody was on the water; and I saw many familiar faces. I had been sent for, to paint the foyer of the Opera-House as soon as I finished the one in New York. They told me they had no more money, after the first lunette; the Director was such an expensive one. I accepted the commission on that basis; and am painting the whole hall.

“I was rather ill when I landed in New York, and for two months Monty took care of me.— You can't think what a gentle nurse that big fellow made! But he's made up for it since.

“I am finishing some portraits in New York

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now. My studio hangs over the city, with vast blue windows open to the night. The clouds, up here, are marvellous. The Metropolitan Life Tower with its shining eyes, watches with me. Sometimes, it all seems like a dream; and then again, so ugly, it almost breaks my heart. There are no flowers anywhere . . .”

Muriel read as far as this and dropped her head on her arm. After a moment, Mrs. Osborne stirred uneasily. “There is more?”

“Nothing more. It is just signed, ‘Hieronymus Himself.’” She leaned forward suddenly and pressed her forehead against the iron railing. “Oh, why could he not have stayed with us last spring! He was my best friend. What are all these people here, compared to him? — Mother, tell him to come back: he has been so sad!”

“Et moi donc?” Her voice was bitter and low. “People who have done wrong must suffer for it.”

“Only the good ones do!”

“Who is good, Muriel?”

“You — and Jerome. — Jerome had to fight things. *We* did n’t. And he won. He must have

cared very greatly . . .” Then, with a cry, as though in sudden anxiety. “Mother, — you cared, too, did n’t you? You *do* care, mother?”

The beautiful head was turned away, gazing dumbly towards the Arch. The little girl knew, from long childhood years, that this heart could not be forced to speak. In her recent knowledge of the pain of love, forced on her by her meeting with Golda, by the tragedy of her governess, she felt dimly that her question was one which Jerome would have given his life-blood to hear answered, — that he might never hear it answered.

She drew nearer until she could see her mother’s eyes in the starlight: and she saw them dim with tears.

“Oh — don’t let there be any more sad people. So many people are sad —!”

Mrs. Osborne drew her child close to her, almost fiercely, and rested her cheek against the brown head.

Muriel did not move. She was thinking intently. The tender voice broke.

“My poor little daughter — to have this pain for nothing — all this pain for nothing!”

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The roses fell between them unheeded; and after a passionate kiss, Muriel rose to her feet and passed through the French window.

She ran back, holding a cablegram blank.

"Mother, mother," she whispered. "Write to him: 'Come!'"

"Muriel, what do you ask? I can't!" It was like a cry.

"Even if you want to?"

"I can't!"

Muriel stooped and spread the paper on her knee. "Then I will."

She carefully wrote the address from the letter before her; and underneath it the word, "Come." Then, looking up with shining eyes: "Think, mother — in only three hours' time, he will enter the dark studio, and he will see the cable — and in a flash he will know!"

"Don't!" She covered her eyes with her hands as though the darkness could not cover her enough. The child did not realize all that this word would imply to Jerome; but *she* knew, as she had never known anything before. She had never — it was the beauty of it — been called upon to *do* anything in her life. It was

conceivably only necessary for her to *be*. She remained incredibly true to herself; for it was Muriel who raised the fallen crimson flowers and laid them one by one on her mother's knees, saying, as if to herself:—

“He will read it and read it and read it, all blurred by his tears and ours —”

“You will be ill, darling. What have they done to you? Don't talk in that wild way!”

“I am only happy!” Muriel's voice deepened as she added: “And he will answer, ‘Mary, I come!’”

Mrs. Osborne rose to her feet, the blossoms gathered up against her heart. She stood a moment, swaying, her eyes fixed above the child's head, her lips opening as if to call. But no word came.

Muriel slipped inside the window; and presently the young voice rang out into the evening air: “My finger is on the bell; and in a moment Alphonse will be here . . . Mother, mother, he is waiting . . . It shall go?”

THE END

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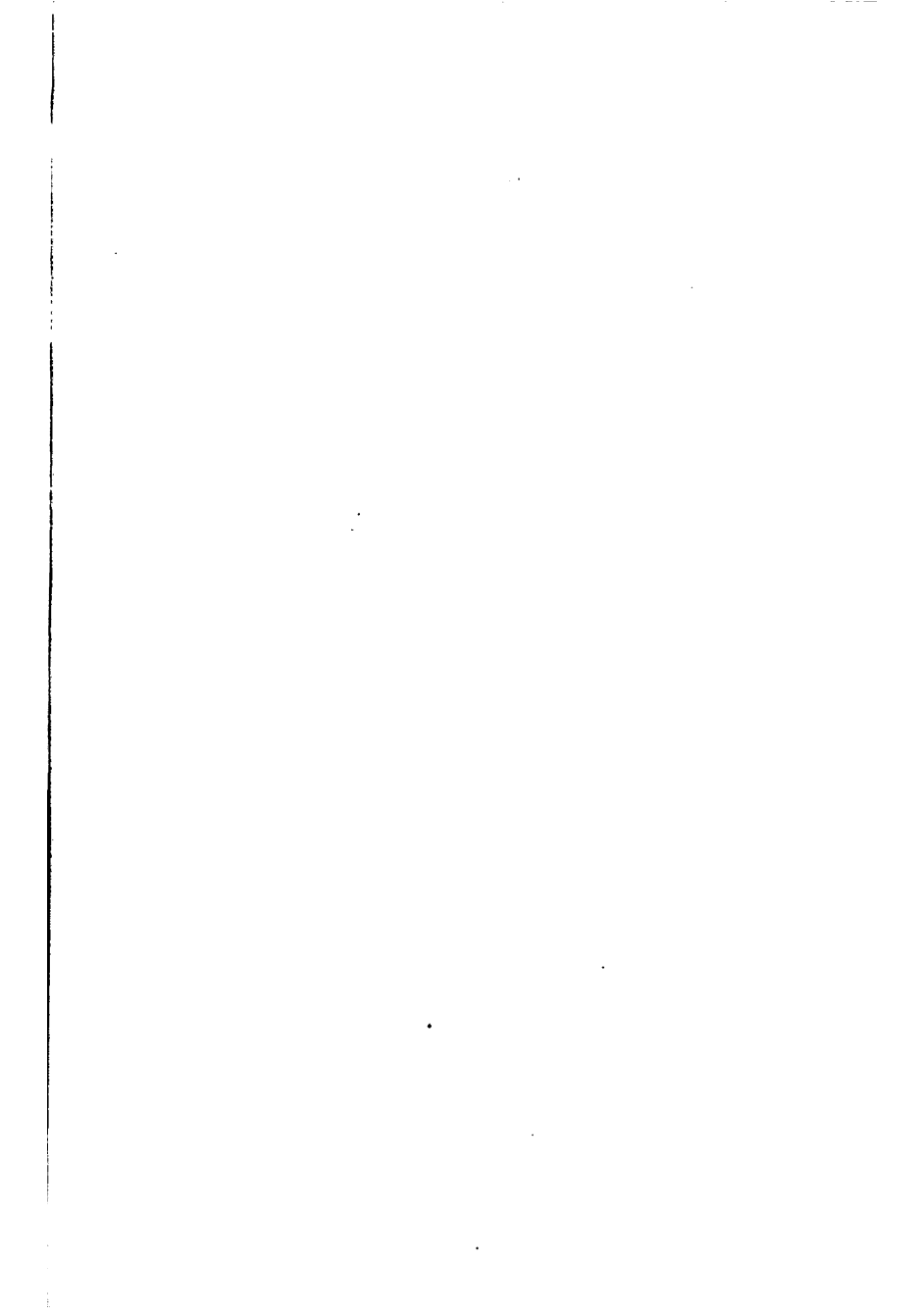
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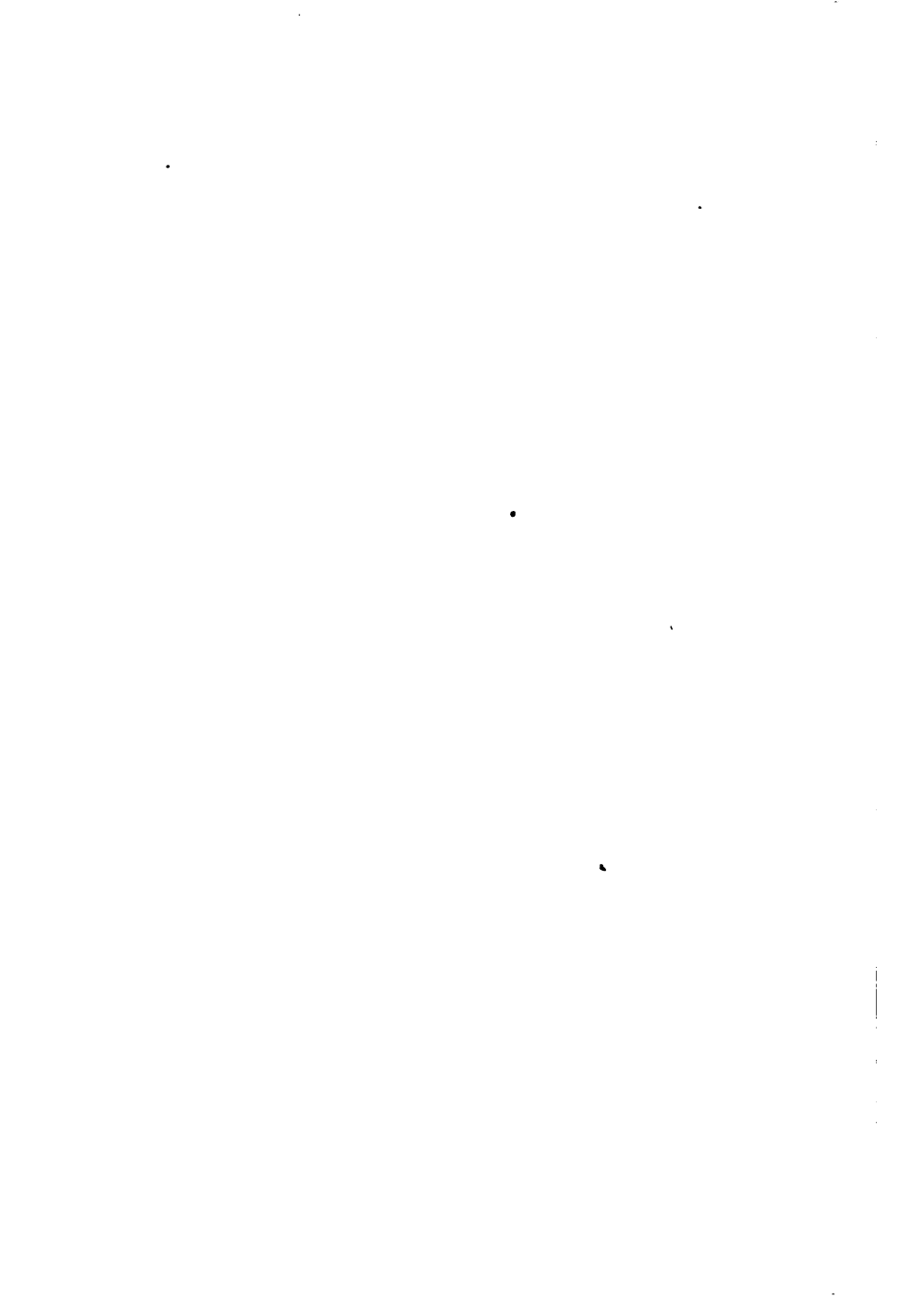
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